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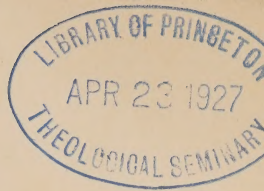
An answer to the Archbishop
of York



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ENDLESS TORMENTS.





AN ANSWER

TO THE

ARCHBISHOP OF YORK

William Thomson

ON THE SUBJECT OF

ENDLESS TORMENTS.

BY

A BACHELOR OF DIVINITY.

James A. Mackay



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AN ANSWER.

TO THE

ARCHBISHOP OF YORK, ETC.

October 31st, 1864.

MY LORD ARCHBISHOP,

ONLY a few hours have elapsed since I saw for the first time, in the *Athenæum* of July 30th, the following statement :—

“ Dr. Thomson says :—‘The doctrine of a terminable punishment for the wicked finds no countenance whatever from Holy Scripture. Those who have maintained it can do no more than suggest plausible explanations of texts that make against them ; even they must admit that there is not one passage of Scripture that clearly authorizes the hope of restoration for the sinner once condemned. On the other hand, the declarations that the punishment of the wicked is eternal are many, and those most clear and emphatic. Eternal wrath, put into antithesis with eternal life ; eternal chains ; the wrath of God abiding on a man so that he shall never see life ; the worm that never dieth ;—can all these be explained away ? Even if they could, not one of them

promises salvation for the sinner once condemned. If they were not conclusive for everlastingness, they would not be in favour of the salvation of the wicked at the last. On the other hand, the doctrine that the wicked are punished for ever would be gathered, not from these express texts alone, but from the whole tenor of Scripture; which speaks of this life as our probation and of the next as our reward, which represents the judgment as final, which is utterly silent as to any economy of probation after death. I beseech my brethren of the clergy to beware of exceeding or departing from the statements of Scripture upon this awful subject. We are in the hands of a just God, who has revealed in Holy Writ His way of dealing with His creatures so far as we need to know it for a guide to our faith and a motive to practical duties. Let us rest in that revelation.' ”

Whether these words are quoted from your Grace's charge, or from a letter addressed to the Rev. James Brierley, Incumbent of Holy Trinity Church, Mossley, I am unable to determine. This, however, is of no great consequence. The statement as it stands is very plain, without reference to context. To many thoughtful, honest, and pious persons the question presents itself, *Is that statement true?* Some very sincere members of the Church of England do not, cannot believe it, and do not consider themselves in any way pledged to believe it. They hold not only that the doctrine of a terminable punishment (the word *discipline* is preferred) finds countenance from Holy Scripture, but that the opposite doctrine of endless punish-

ment contradicts the general tenor of the Bible, and many dogmatic statements therein which are remarkable for their clearness. The real meaning of the words translated *eternal*, *everlasting*, etc., and of such figurative expressions as the *undying worm* and the *unquenched fire*, cannot be inconsistent, they maintain, with the declared purpose of our Saviour's advent, and the revealed result of His mediatorial reign. Your Grace remarks, that even if these expressions could be explained away, "not one of them promises salvation for the sinner once condemned." To this it is answered that "he that believeth not is condemned already;"—that, nevertheless, the Gospel of salvation is formally offered to multitudes of unbelievers every Sunday, and that it would be most unreasonable to look for promises in the very words which convey threatenings. You affirm that "the whole tenor of Scripture speaks of this life as our probation and of the next as our reward," and "represents the judgment as final," and "is utterly silent as to any economy of probation after death." On each of these points, your assertion is met by a confident denial.

I trust, then, that your Grace will have patience with me if I venture to set forth, at some length, the reasons why many excellent persons, who believe that "we are in the hands of a just God," and that He hath given us a revelation in Holy Writ, and that the Church of England is the purest church in Christendom, are unable to accede to your published opinion. In such cases, the truth cannot be ascertained and established, unless a fair hearing be given to both sides. I have

quoted your Grace's statement entire, as I found it. *Nunc decet te audire alteram partem.* May I be permitted to state the argument for the opposition? You are the Lord Archbishop of an English province; I am the obscure clergyman of a foreign station. But your Grace and I came into the world about the same time: we took our first degree in the same year; and I, as well as you, have devoted the best part of my life to the study of theology. This may save my appearance in the lists against so distinguished a prelate from being considered ridiculous. Apart from any personal considerations, the following argument will receive, I doubt not, as much attention as it may deserve.

I.

Some passages of Scripture may be looked upon as key-texts, given by God to admit us into His own council chamber, in order that we may have some idea of the general "plan of the ages"* which he is working out; in order that we may not be perplexed by seeming inconsistencies, when our attention is fixed only upon a part of the whole; and in order that we may be able, according to our capacity, to take a comprehensive survey, from a high point of view, of the Divine government of the world, and the final destiny of its inhabitants.

Such a key-text is the following, from St. John's first Epistle:—"For this purpose the Son of God was manifested, that He might destroy the works of the

* *πρόθεσιν τῶν αἰώνων*, Eph. iii. 11.

devil." St. Paul also teaches, that God the Son became incarnate "that, through death, He might destroy him that had the power of death, that is, the devil." From the one passage we learn that our Lord came to destroy, or undo, the devil himself; and from the other, that He came to destroy, or undo, the works of the devil.

The same thought is amplified under various forms of expression in other portions of Scripture. St. Paul tells us that it seemed good unto God "to reconcile all things unto Himself by Christ, whether things in earth, or things in the heavens" (Col. i. 20); again, that "God was in Christ, reconciling the world unto Himself;" and, still further, that God had "made known unto us the mystery of His will, according to His good pleasure which He hath purposed in Himself" (2 Cor. v. 19). And what is the will and good pleasure of God which He has now revealed to us? Even this, "In the dispensation of the fulness of times to gather together in one all things in Christ, both which are in the heavens, and which are on earth" (Eph. i. 9, 10).

Then, looking forward into the far future, the same apostle, who received "by the revelation of Jesus Christ" the Gospel which he preached, predicts in a few sublime sentences the termination of the mediatorial kingdom, when all the purposes for which it was inaugurated shall have been fully accomplished. "Then cometh the end, when He shall have delivered up the kingdom to God, even the Father; when He shall have put down all rule, and all authority, and power. For He must reign till He hath put all enemies under His feet. The last enemy that shall be

destroyed is death. For He hath put all things under His feet. And when all things shall be subdued unto Him, then shall the Son also Himself be subject unto Him that put all things under Him, that God may be all in all" (1 Cor. xv. 24-29).

This, then, is the result to which the Divine dispensations have all along been tending; and "for this purpose the Son of God was manifested, that He might destroy the works of the devil," which include all forms of evil, all forms of opposition to God. God hath highly exalted our Saviour, in order "that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, of things in heaven, and things in earth, and things under the earth; and that every tongue should confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father" (Philipp. ii. 10). "The Father loveth the Son, and hath given *all* things into His hand" (St. John iii. 35). Christ himself said, "All that the Father giveth me shall come to me; and him that cometh to me I will in no wise cast out. For I came down from heaven, not to do mine own will, but the will of Him that sent me. And this is the Father's will which hath sent me, that of all which He hath given me I should lose nothing, but should raise it up again at the last day" (St. John vi. 37-39). This is as clear as if it were written with a sunbeam. This is not the language of poetry, which requires allowance to be made for the exaggeration of highly-wrought figures. On the contrary, the subject is treated in the plainest terms possible. There is not a more simple statement of heavenly doctrine in the whole Bible. And whatever is taught us by God must

be consistent. If, therefore, any passages of inspired truth appear to contradict the passages now cited, the contradiction is not, cannot be, real, but is only seeming. Any limitations put upon the divine purpose, during its progressive working out, must be understood as referring only to some period on this side of "the restitution of all things." This rule is the only one which will enable the reader to reconcile the texts ; and it leads to no conclusions but such as conscience and reason would anticipate.

But if it was the purpose of God ultimately to destroy the works of the devil, to overcome evil with good until there should not remain in the universe one enemy of Christ, why was evil originally permitted by God ? If His wisdom is infinite, might He not have devised a scheme without this defect ? If His goodness is infinite, why did He allow what involves such an amount of misery ? If His power is infinite, could He not have effected all the results which the present scheme shall ultimately produce, by some other scheme excluding the possibility of sin ? I reply, that to call the permission of sin a defect in the present scheme, is to beg the whole question. There is, doubtless, a high sense in which it may be truly said, when we contemplate the scheme as a whole, that "whatever is, is right." If any particular were not necessary, from God's point of view, and with reference to all the ends contemplated by Him, it would have been omitted. There is an economy of method and of means in all His works and ways with which we are acquainted ; and this justifies the inference, especially when we think of His glorious

attributes, that He never wastes power, and that when He doeth "what seemeth Him good," He does the very best thing that could be done in the circumstances. And since all the circumstances are a part of the scheme—for "known unto God are all His works from the beginning of the world"—His selection of the existing scheme in preference to any other possible one, must have been the best thing that could be done when it was selected. If He might have chosen a better scheme, and yet actually chose the inferior one, this argues imperfection in the Deity, which is absurd. The scheme, in the midst of which we find ourselves, is, therefore, from God's point of view, the best of all possible schemes.

Whatever explanations may hereafter be given us, evil is at present a fact, and Christ was manifested that He might destroy it. Sin and all its consequences came into the world through the Fall of the first Adam; and they are to be destroyed by the second Adam, "the Lord from heaven." For observe, it is not said merely that "the Son of God was manifested" to oppose, counteract, and overturn "the works of the devil," but to destroy them—thoroughly to undo the evil that had been done. And it is not only some of them that are thus to be destroyed, but all of them. There are no partitives employed, no exceptions made. "The last enemy that shall be destroyed is death," (certainly including the only death which was introduced by the Fall, viz., spiritual death in trespasses and sins); and there can be none after "the last." So that "the works of the devil" shall be destroyed

in every place, and in all circumstances, in which they are now, or shall be hereafter.

“Then cometh the end.” “Then !” *When ?* That is a question which God only can answer ; and we have no reason to suppose that the answer will be given until the event shall declare it. The world was millions of years in process of preparation for becoming the dwelling-place of man. Millions of years may still have to elapse before “the end” shall be, when Christ shall have “destroyed the works of the devil,” including even the very last enemy. The system under which man has appeared in the universe, and under which he is to become a “partaker of the divine nature,” may, for aught we know, be one in a vast series of economies or dispensations, which have been evolving in the past eternity, and shall be evolving in the coming eternity. And between them all there may be a connexion, of which we know nothing. That may be one of the higher studies of the life to come. Divine revelation does not embrace the eternal past or the eternal future. Have we the slightest ground for the notion, that this is the first of all the schemes of Deity, that God was inactive from all eternity until what is called in Genesis “the beginning,” when He “created the heavens and the earth ?”

I repeat, that the system under which man has appeared may require millions of years for its development and completion. But, like all God’s works, all the works of a perfect Being, it must prove in the end a perfect whole, perfectly answering in every particular the design of Him, unto whom all His works

are known from the beginning, who is wonderful in counsel and excellent in working, who is good to all, whose tender mercies are over all His works, and whose mercy endureth for ever.

“Then cometh the end, when Christ shall have delivered up the kingdom to God, even the Father, when the Son shall have put down all rule, and all authority and power (adverse to Himself. This must include all power exercised by sin and the devil—all forms of evil, including suffering). For Christ must reign till He hath put all enemies under His feet, (that is, destroyed all enemies, or at least all enmity, as the next verse proves). The last enemy that shall be destroyed is death. For the Father hath put all things under Christ’s feet. But when it is said (in the eighth Psalm, by the Holy Ghost) all things are put under Him, it is manifest that the Father is excepted, which did put all things under the Son. (How wonderful that so obvious an exception should be mentioned! How clearly the mention of that exception excludes the possibility of any other remaining, still existing, but not mentioned!) And when all things shall be subdued unto Christ, then shall the son also Himself (as the Son) be subject unto the Father who put all things under the Son, that God (essential Deity) may be all in all (may wholly fill, direct, and bless all His intelligent creatures). “Thanks be to God for His unspeakable gift!” for sending His Son into the world, “not to condemn the world, but that the world through him might be saved!” (St. John iii. 17).

We read, in the Apocalypse, of the “everlasting Gospel;” and the epithet “everlasting” might at first

seem to contradict the assertion that when "the end cometh," God shall be "all in all," because then there will be none in the universe to need the good news of an offered salvation, because then it shall have been actually realized as "tidings of great joy" by "all people," and all things in heaven, on earth, and under the earth, shall have been gathered together into one Head in Christ. The term "everlasting," as applied to the "gospel," implies that the gospel will be available as long as there are any to be benefited by it. But the word rendered in our translation "everlasting" in this and many other passages, and adopted thence into some ecclesiastical formularies, does not strictly mean *ever*-lasting, but long-lasting, age-enduring, or enduring throughout the æon or dispensation. There is not in Hebrew or Greek a word signifying absolute eternity. Eternity! How soon it is spoken! yet how inconceivable the idea! A thousand millions of centuries! Can we conceive such a period? Yet a thousand millions are represented by ten figures in a row. I can write the number on a finger-nail. Suppose a measuring-tape reaching from the earth to the sun, and covered with a row of figures, thus increasing tenfold in value by every remove from unity, and let unity represent a century. O my soul, what a period! Yet, compared with eternity, in the full sense of the word, it is less than a handbreadth to the length of a sun-beam. There is no proportion.

God said to Abraham, "I will give unto thee, and to thy seed after thee, all the land of Canaan for an *everlasting* possession." But the land of Canaan ceased

many centuries ago to be the possession of the seed of Abraham. The word rendered "everlasting" means, therefore, long-lasting, age-enduring, or enduring throughout the dispensation.

The ritual observances of the Mosaic Law are constantly spoken of in the Pentateuch as "everlasting." For instance, with reference to the yearly atonement to be made for the children of Israel by the High Priest, consecrated "to minister in the priest's office in his father's stead," it is said, "This shall be an *everlasting* statute unto you." The statute, however, was intended to be observed only until the atonement, which this prefigured, should be made by Christ upon the cross. The word rendered "everlasting" means, therefore, in such passages, long-lasting, age-enduring, or enduring throughout the dispensation.

It may be objected that this interpretation would limit the happiness of the righteous as well as the punishment of the wicked, since the duration of the one and the other is expressed by the same word as that applied to the Gospel, to the possession of Canaan, and to the ceremonial law. Dr. Stillingfleet says, on St. Matthew xxv., "the word (everlasting) in which the main force of the argument lies, *doth not carry with it an absolute perpetuity*. It is so far from signifying a necessary perpetuity that it is applied to such cases as, 'He shall serve him for ever' (Exod. xxi. 6), that is, as the Jews themselves expound it, to the next jubilee, though it were near or far off."

That the happiness of the righteous in a future state shall be *absolutely* endless, is certain, not because Scrip-

ture applies to it the epithet which our translators render "everlasting,"—(that indeed would be no proof, for the rendering is not strictly correct); but because goodness, being God-like, must be eternal as God, and because holy Scripture affirms the eternal blessedness of the "heirs of God and joint heirs with Christ" in a great variety of statements quite independent of those in which occurs the word *αἰώνιος*, popularly rendered "everlasting." With regard to the duration of punishment, on the other hand, the case is widely different; and we ought to remember, when dealing with so awful a subject, that "*no truth, no matter of fact, fairly laid open, can ever subvert true religion*" (Lard. Gosp. Hist.), that God never can be served by what is false, whether it be in the form of exaggeration or misrepresentation. It is not possible for a believer in the Christian religion to doubt that the sufferings of the wicked in a future state will be terrible. The figurative expressions employed to represent them are of the most appalling kind. Unquestionably this is a subject to which men's thoughts turn too lightly and too seldom. It would be impossible for one to go on deliberately in sin, if what is revealed concerning future punishment were clearly before his mind as *truth*; and it would be impossible for Christians to be so indifferent about the spiritual welfare of their thoughtless friends and neighbours, did they remember what our loving Saviour Himself has taught as to the doom of the rebellious. "For this purpose the Son of God was manifested, that he might destroy the works of the devil;" and destroyed they shall be in "the end."

But the end may, for aught we know, be millions of millions of years distant. The vast power of numbers may fail to represent to our minds the cycles of duration yet to elapse before the mediatorial kingdom shall have been delivered up by Christ to the Father. *Without real sorrow for sin and hearty faith in the Gospel of Christ, no human soul can possibly be saved.* There must be a complete and permanent surrender of the rebellious will; for the rebellious element in the will is one of "the works of the devil," and, as such, it must be destroyed. This surrender of the will, which in the present life may, by God's grace, be the work of a moment, may, by the withdrawal of that grace, neglected or spurned here, become in the life to come impossible for ages upon ages, before it shall please God to renew the invitation and help the sinner to return. Nothing in this connexion can be more impressive or more convincing, if the heart would yield to the reason, than our Saviour's words, when he puts the case hypothetically, "What shall it profit a man, if he gain the whole world and lose his own soul? or what shall a man give in exchange for his soul?"

II.

We are unable to think of the infinite God as He really is, because our minds are limited: we cannot form a true conception of His nature and attributes, and so we fall into the error of thinking of Him as if He were a creature like ourselves, under the limitations of time and space. From this error many

others take their beginning. We think of God's dealings with man as the result of a series of successive processes in the Divine mind, whereas in reality there can be no succession of thoughts in God.

We read in Scripture that Christ is "the Lamb slain from the foundation of the world" (Rev. xiii. 8). This means that, in the *purpose* of God, He was slain from the beginning; that the redemption of man by the death of our atoning Saviour was not an after thought to remedy unforeseen evils, but from the beginning a part of the Divine scheme concerning mankind. Man innocent in Paradise—man fallen and guilty—man redeemed—man restored: God "all in all" at the beginning—God "all in all" at the end, at the delivering up of the mediatorial kingdom to the Father: these are ideas (if we may so speak with reverence) which never have been separated in the mind of God. These are not to the infinite Being a series of successive ideas. But men agree about them as if they were, and thus imagine difficulties which never existed, and attempt to solve these imaginary difficulties by explanations which are often utterly at variance with the known attributes of God.

Nothing unforeseen happens in God's dominions. It was a part of his plan from the beginning that sin should be permitted, and that redemption by Christ should be the remedy; that "where sin abounded, grace should much more abound" (Rom. v. 20); that "*as by the offence of one*"—the first Adam—"judgment" was to come "*upon all men to condemnation; even so by the righteousness of one*"—the second Adam, the incar-

nate Son of God—" *the free gift*" was to come " *upon all men unto justification of life*" (Rom. v. 18).

The reason, the necessity, of permitting sin we do not now fully understand: but we see the Divine justice, love, goodness, and mercy, gloriously manifested in providing a remedy commensurate, nay (the apostle says) more than commensurate, with the permitted evil. "Where sin abounded, grace did much more abound." The blessing stretches beyond the curse: the good encircles and extinguishes the evil.

This view of the Gospel, set forth by St. Paul in a variety of aspects, meets the natural inquiries of reason, harmonizes with the teaching of conscience, and justifies the ways of God to man. It represents our Creator as our loving Father, whom we cannot knowingly disobey, without evincing the basest ingratitude and incurring the most heinous guilt.

When God was about to destroy Sodom, Abraham supposed that there must be a considerable number of "righteous" in the doomed city; and, in the light of God-given conscience, his reason could not acquiesce in the punishment of the righteous with the wicked. So he is represented as saying to the Lord, "That be far from Thee to do after this manner, to slay the righteous with the wicked." "Shall not the Judge of all the earth do right?" In other words, Shall not He who gave me conscience and reason to guide my conduct, and who shall judge all men according to their works, do now and at all times that which the universal conscience and reason declare to be right? The Lord recognized the justice of this appeal, by promising to

spare, not only the righteous themselves, but the whole city for their sakes, if even so many as ten righteous persons could be found in it.

There are various passages of Holy Scripture in which God addresses directly Reason judging in the light of conscience, challenges inquiry into His dealings with mankind, and claims homage and confidence as their Creator and Father, holy, just, loving, and merciful. "Come now, let us reason together, saith the Lord." "Have I any pleasure at all that the wicked should die? saith the Lord God; and not that he should return from his ways and live?" "Yet ye say, The way of the Lord is not equal. Hear now, O house of Israel, Is not my way equal? Are not your ways unequal?" "Is God unrighteous who taketh vengeance?" *i.e.* Will God take vengeance unrighteously? "God forbid: for then how shall God judge the world?" (Rom. iii. 5, 6). In other words, it is impossible that He who is to judge the world can do what all men see to be unjust.

It is clearly not the will of God that men should close the eyes of reason and quench the light of conscience, under the notion of doing homage to revelation. If anything in the Divine dealings seems to be unjust, it must be because we are imperfectly acquainted with the facts; or because we do not understand the whole case, and the relations of the parts to the whole, and to one another.

The scheme of Redemption, however, has been often represented in such a manner that the prevalence of scepticism can hardly be wondered at. When teachers of religion ascribe to God principles and conduct which

cannot be justified according to those ideas of equity which the Divine Creator Himself has implanted in the human breast, the result, as might be expected, is scepticism among the reflecting, superstition among the weak, and hypocrisy among the unscrupulous.

By a vast number of teachers, at this hour, in books and in pulpits, God is represented as arbitrary, vindictive, and partial—as a hard master, claiming the right to reap where he has not sowed, and to gather where he has not strawed—claiming, for example, Christian virtues from those who never heard of Christ, and dooming them to perdition in eternal fire, because they are unable to meet the claim. They speak of a God, whose attributes are, in many respects, utterly irreconcilable with the character of “Our Father,” whom Jesus Christ, in parables and other discourses, revealed to mankind. If some of the popular theologies were true, it would be impossible to answer the question, “Shall not the Judge of all the earth do right?” It would be impossible to affirm, with reference even to the Jews, the sincerity of the remonstrance, “What could have been done more for my vineyard, that I have not done in it?” That such theologies will, in the end, prove to be wood, hay, and stubble, those who believe in the immortality of truth need not for a moment doubt.

What, then, is the message which we are authorized to publish to all the world—to every intelligent creature? What is the Gospel, which the angel announced to the shepherds at Bethlehem, at our blessed Saviour’s advent, as “Good tidings of great joy, which

shall be to all people?" Even the birth of "a Saviour which is Christ the Lord"—the "Lord both of the dead and living"—"the Saviour of all men," "who tasted death for every man," who is "a propitiation for our sins, and not for ours only, but for the sins of the whole world." "As by one man's disobedience the many (all men) were made sinners, so by the obedience of One shall the many (all men) be made righteous." "God was in Christ, reconciling the world unto Himself." "We *are* reconciled to God by the death of His Son."

St. Paul says, "Though we, or an angel from heaven, preach any other gospel unto you than that which we have preached unto you, let him be accursed." This is strong language. (St. Paul did not claim Divine authority for everything he wrote.) Yet who that comes to the Bible with simplicity of heart, and ordinary intelligence, can doubt that the Church of Rome, and the Churches of the Reformation, have all (more or less) been preaching another gospel?—a system of bondage—a system of terror—a system which, if we could realize all its bearings, would paralyze every faculty of the mind, and make us feel that "That way madness lies."

The true gospel of Jesus Christ, which Paul the Apostle preached, is *really* good news to all; yea, "good tidings of great joy." It is an expansion and perpetual illustration of the central truth of the universe, that "God is Love." The dregs of Popery, and even of traditions that preceded the rise of Popery, still remain in our Protestant Churches. These need again to be put under treatment; for the signs of disease are every-

where visible. The temporizing policy of those who pride themselves upon their caution, would have prevented the first Reformation; and, if it were possible for reflecting men to acquiesce in it now, it would arrest the second. But that cannot be. God in *His Providence* is undoubtedly *educating the race*. He has been doing so all along. The history of mankind is the history of human thought, human motive, human purpose, human passion. But all has been under control. The river seems to flow "at its own sweet will;" but the law of gravitation directs its course. The great currents and confluences of human opinion may appear to be the result merely of chance and circumstances, but they are all under Divine control. "The king's heart is in the hands of the Lord, as the rivers of water: He turneth it whithersoever He will." So, too, are the hearts of all the people—of the student of theology or philosophy, when he thinks and writes; of the politician, when he devises and declares his policy; of the military leader, when he conducts his campaign; of the journalist, when he pens his criticisms; and of the multitude, of all ranks and conditions, when they read his opinions and express their own. Under the invisible control, to which the hearts of all are subject, in a mysterious way which interferes not with responsibility, a spirit of theological inquiry has gone abroad. Every day it increases in earnestness and power. It will not be gagged by traditions or formularies. It must ascertain the foundations on which orthodoxy rests. In matters that affect the eternal condition of the souls which God has made, it will not receive "for doctrines the commandments of

men," even though backed by the pomp and circumstance, the arrogance and the anathemas, of councils, assemblies, convocations, and synods. If this inquiring spirit be met, as it ought to be, by learning, candour, and a manly adherence to truth, the glory of God will be promoted and the kingdom of Christ will be extended. In every part of His dominions, visibly outspread before us, or outwardly invisible but nevertheless real to the exploring mind, God's works and ways invite inspection. Now "we know in part," and only in part. It is intended that our progress should be gradual. But to suppose that ignorance can be the mother of such devotion as will be pleasing in the sight of God, or that reasonable inquiry is opposed to piety, or that God can be served by propagating belief in mistakes and delusions, is to go back into the darkness from which we are never weary of telling the world that our forefathers emerged three centuries ago.

The true meaning of *Redemption* has never been fully recognized by Christendom. The exclusiveness of Judaism has never been got rid of. Christianity was inoculated with it in the very first age, and to this hour it poisons the life of the Church. Although in St. Paul's Epistles there are some "things hard to be understood," his teaching on the subject of redemption and its consequences is very clear. The happiness of our immortal souls cannot be supposed to depend on our being able to see through his darker passages. And the number of these is not great. Some things which St. Peter thought "hard to be understood" do not necessarily present the same difficulties to us. His mind was brimful of Jewish

notions. The outpouring of the Spirit on the day of Pentecost had not the effect of eradicating his prejudices. His whole character was elevated and transfigured: but he was still, in many respects, a narrow-minded Jew, quite unable as yet to enter into the glorious catholicity of our Saviour's parting command, "Go ye into all the world, and preach the Gospel to every creature." Paul, soon after his conversion, was ages ahead of most of his contemporaries. It is astonishing to what an extent he was enabled, in a short time, to shake off his Jewish prejudices — prejudices which from childhood had coloured all his modes of thought. There is nothing narrow or sectional about the scheme of Christian doctrine contained in his epistles, although they have been cited, from age to age, in support of many varieties of error. Detached texts, like bits of glass in a kaleidoscope (as some one has truly said), may be made to assume ten thousand forms, unlike anything in earth or heaven.

God created man in His own image. It was by the Divine Son that God made the worlds, and all things contained therein, including man. The Divine Son is the second Adam, "the Lamb slain from the foundation of the world," the pre-ordained Redeemer of the creatures whom He made in His own image. He foresaw their fall. The means of recovery were provided. In the Divine counsels Christ was regarded as already "sacrificed for us," as already "a propitiation for the sins of the whole world." As soon as "sin entered into the world," Christ became "the Lord our righteousness," the second representative head of the human family.

As before our birth we were reckoned fallen creatures in Adam, so before our birth we were reckoned redeemed creatures in Christ. Adam sold himself and his descendants (as it were) into slavery to the old serpent, which is the devil; and the consequences of that transaction are felt in our human nature still. Christ redeemed us from bondage, bought us back with the price of His own precious blood; and the consequences of that redemption shall only begin to be fully realized, when Christ shall have delivered up the kingdom to God, even the Father, and God shall be "all in all."

III.

We read that "In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth;" and also that a time is coming when God shall be "all in all." That beginning in the distant past, and that consummation in the distant future, are the chronological limits which God has hitherto assigned to revelation. Of His works done in the eternity before that beginning, and of His works to be done in the eternity after that consummation, we know absolutely nothing. Imagination alone can go beyond these boundaries. We know, indeed, that after the consummation there will be such happiness as must result from the long-predicted fact that God shall be "all in all." But of the outgoings of Deity before the creation of the existing universe, or of the employments of His creatures after the delivering up of the kingdom by Christ to the Father, we can know nothing at pre-

sent. An impenetrable veil conceals from our view the past eternity, before what is recorded began, and the coming eternity, after what is revealed shall have been completed.

Even of the interval embraced *within* the limits of revelation our knowledge is extremely imperfect. God has been pleased to make known only what most directly concerns us. "He has revealed in Holy Writ His way of dealing with His creatures, so far as we need to know it for a guide to our faith and a motive to practical duties." It must be of the first importance that we should not misunderstand the substance of that revelation, or forget the limits which God in His wisdom has assigned to it. Of the creation of angels, their number, their nature, their capacities, and the origin of sin among them, what do we know? When did "the angels which kept not their first estate" leave "their own habitation?" Where *was* that habitation? *Where* are they "reserved in everlasting chains under darkness unto the judgment of the great day?" On every hand we are met by questions of the deepest interest, which remain unanswered. With the Bible, the record of revelation, in our hands, we cannot tell (strictly speaking) whence we come or whither we go. We know that God is our Creator, and that there will be retribution in a future state. But this does not teach us whence we came, or whither we go. I speak of the soul: the body without it is a mere animal. Are myriads of souls created by the Almighty every day, to tenant the bodies of successive generations of infants? Or, if each soul is not a fresh creation, by what law are souls propa-

gated? Or, if they pre-existed, *where*? Truly we know not whence they come: it is not revealed. And whither do they go? Where are the spirits of the dead? To what part of the universe are they gone? Do they hover near the earth, or have they soared far away to some distant region? Where is Paradise? Where is heaven? Where is hell? Our Saviour, in the visible human body in which he ascended, is in some one place. Where is that place? Again we cannot answer. Nothing of all this is revealed. Is it wonderful, seeing that the Scriptures give so little information concerning the unseen world, that they do not enter into particulars "as to any economy of probation after death?" The result is asserted plainly: the steps by which it is to be reached are not presented to our view.

The revelation handed down to us in the Bible is of priceless value. It teaches us our relation to God; our redemption through Christ; and how we are to triumph over evil, by union with our Saviour, and through the sanctifying power of the Holy Spirit. But it gives us only a series of glimpses of Divine truth in outline. A large part of the Old Testament is even now too difficult for us. The most learned and earnest interpreters differ so widely, that often they only perplex us, and leave us groping in mist or darkness. In the Gospels we have but fragments of our Saviour's teaching, and *brief notes* of His life upon earth. "There are also many other things which Jesus did, the which, if they should be written every one, I suppose that even the world itself could not contain the books that should be written." So says an apostle, by a bold figure. That there are

great difficulties in the Bible is admitted and felt by the most learned.

Yet how often do Christians argue on abstruse points of speculative theology with the greatest positiveness, as if the Bible contained a complete and perfectly intelligible solution of all problems ! From dark and isolated texts, they boldly draw inferences with regard to the moral government of God and the destiny of His creatures, which contradict conscience, reason, experience, and many of the plainest statements of the Bible itself. Can anything be clearer than St. Paul's announcement of the result of Messiah's mediatorial reign ? Yet bigotry clothes itself with cursing as with a garment, and has no hesitation in proclaiming the irretrievable perdition and endless torment of nearly the whole human race thus far, as a chief doctrine of the Gospel, a main feature of the Christian religion. To ascribe to God what shocks the sense of justice in every honest mind, is to take His name in vain. "If," says Dr. John Taylor (1762), "we understand anything in revealed religion in a sense contradictory to natural religion, or to *the known perfections of God, and the common notions of good and evil which HE hath written upon all our hearts*, we may be sure *we are in error, and mistake the sense of revelation.*" "Whatever," says Stillingfleet, "speaks a direct repugnancy to any of the fundamental dictates of nature, cannot be of Divine revelation."

Men may worship an idol, a demon of their own imagining, and call that demon God. The only living and true God is the Creator of the human mind, and

the Saviour of the world. To Him principles and actions which are revolting to upright men in all ages and countries can never with truth be attributed.

If truth is really our object, we must not overlook the chronological limits of revelation. The universe in which we dwell may be but one in a series. Yet, to us, all is an infinite blank, from "the beginning" spoken of in the first verse of the Bible, back, back, back into the viewless and inconceivable depths of the preceding eternity. Again, on from the period when God shall be "all in all," the ages of the coming eternity will unroll, we may believe, schemes and systems and histories which the human mind in its loftiest flight has not now the power of imagining. But, concerning all this, our present revelation—also, I doubt not, the first of a series—is silent. It reaches forward only to the period when, for the first time since the fall of the rebel angels, God shall be "all in all." Had the Bible been arranged in the order of time, this—there is reason to believe—would have been its closing prophecy. The last chapters of the Apocalypse appear to refer to the millennial dispensation, which is comparatively near, although it may still be many centuries distant. But the prophecy of the delivering up of the mediatorial kingdom, and the subjection of the Son to the Father, invites our gaze to a point in the infinite future, the most remote to which revelation at present extends. *There* our horizon meets the sky. Even between us and that far horizon we know not *what* shall be. We can, indeed, infer some of the conditions of that unrevealed future from the very sentence which closes, chronologi-

cally, the revelation. Creatures in harmony with their Creator must be happy. Partakers of the Divine nature must continue to be happy while God endures. Moreover, our minds are so constituted, that society, activity, and beneficence, are necessary to our happiness. We therefore conclude that our employments will be adapted to these God-given characteristics of our nature. "The Lord will provide:" this must be true for ever. But *what* He will provide, or *how* or *where* He will provide it, we cannot know now, but we shall know hereafter. "Secret things belong unto the Lord." *God all in all* closes the door at once of revelation and of prophecy.

Within the limits which God has prescribed to revelation, as a whole, it has been communicated to man in such language as was popularly intelligible, at the periods when the successive parts of the revelation were given. Metaphysical reasoning on time and space we do not find in the Bible. The technicalities and the precise terms of exact science have no place in the record. It speaks of eternities in the plural. It speaks of eternities embraced within the revealed period. The duration of God's existence, absolutely without beginning or ending, we find described in the same terms as the duration of national and ecclesiastical arrangements which have already terminated. "From everlasting to everlasting Thou art God." This is true without qualification. The "everlasting possession" of Canaan; the "everlasting priesthood" of the Mosaic economy; the "everlasting statute" of an annual atonement, are expressions which must be

understood with the limitations which Scripture itself prescribes. The possession of Canaan by the Israelites, the Aaronic priesthood, and the annual atonement, all terminated centuries ago. The same Scriptures which, in popular language, speak of these as *everlasting*, announce their termination. In like manner, the same Scriptures which, in popular language, speak of the "everlasting punishment" of the wicked, and the "everlasting chains" of the fallen angels, announce it to be the purpose of God, "that at the name of Jesus *every* knee should bow, of things in heaven, and things in earth, and things under the earth; and that *every tongue* should confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father" (Philipp. ii. 10, 11). What *can* this mean, especially when taken together with the passages already referred to, but that there will be universal obedience to God in heaven, on earth, and under the earth, and that God shall dwell in every one of His intelligent creatures, without exception?

As the unbelievers in the resurrection said, and continue to say, "How are the dead raised up? and with what body do they come?" so the adherents of traditional theologies ask, How are the fallen angels to be delivered from their chains? and how are the wicked in the prison of hell to "come out from thence?" These are among the numberless questions of deep interest which it has not pleased God to solve in the limited revelation at present before us. He reveals the result, but not the methods.

It has commonly been taken for granted that fallen angels can have no interest in the atonement of Christ,

because "He took not on Him the nature of angels." The inference is not necessary. It is certain that all opposition to God shall cease, if the sublime prediction of St. Paul proceeded from the fountain of truth. The result is declared; the means will be found. God commands *us* to love *our* enemies. Dare we affirm, or for a moment imagine, that He does not love His?

With regard to sinners of the human race, it is clear that none can be saved in this age, or in that which is to come, except through union with Christ. He tasted death for every man; and it is only through the atonement thus made that salvation is possible. The death of the Son of God upon the cross proves that God is loving unto every man. But it proves no less His perfect holiness. Those who die rejecting the offered Gospel "crucify the Son of God afresh," and in the age to come they must endure what the Son of God predicted. They shall be cast into prison, and they shall by no means come out thence till they have paid the uttermost farthing. Sin is inconceivably hateful to God, but it is not infinite. The sufferings of a sinner can be no expiation; but it is only *through sufferings* that human nature can be *perfected*.

The supposed tendency of this teaching is considered by many to be an insurmountable objection against it. "Teach men," say they, "that future punishment is remedial, and therefore not really endless, and you take away the chief restraint which prevents the depraved from rushing into crime." This is a delusion. The traditional doctrine, if really believed, has a ten-

dency only to harden men. They cannot conceive the justice of it; and they rebel more obstinately than ever against the alleged Author of it. But such men, in general, do *not* believe the doctrines, and they care nothing for threats which they look upon as incredible. Punishment which is remedial, punishment with a view to reformation, they can understand. Punishment which is vindictive, punishment with a view to vengeance, is rejected as arbitrary, tyrannical, and contrary to the nature of Him whose light shines in the human conscience.

“But why meddle with this subject at all?” it is asked. “Why disturb the popular belief of Christendom?”

One of the first things to be established in proclaiming Christianity is the universal Fatherhood of God. Take the three parables of the Prodigal Son, the Lost Sheep, and the Lost Piece of Money, and what do they teach? That God is our Father, our Shepherd, our Owner, seeking us *until* He find us, and rejoicing over our recovery in a manner which no words are sufficiently tender to express. He is our Almighty Father, seeking *until He find*. Can the search be for ever in vain in any case? No. He seeks until he finds. None deserves to be found. All are on a level in this respect. Will He persevere (if we may so speak) in seeking for some, while He rests contented though others remain lost? This would show that He has not the feelings of a Father toward all, but only toward some. In an earthly parent, this would be partiality of a kind which God-given conscience condemns. Whatever is beautiful in

paternal love on earth, is infinitely beautiful in God—is but a faint shadow of what exists in Him. From eternity to eternity the love of God—Father, Son, and Holy Ghost—to every human being, has been, is now, and shall for ever continue to be a *truth*, whether we have yet had the eyes of our understanding opened to perceive it, or not. Christ did not redeem sinners without loving them; and since He who redeemed mankind is “the same yesterday, to-day, and for ever,” His love is everlasting. “From everlasting to everlasting He is God,” and “God is love.” I may continue to disbelieve His love for a thousand years or a thousand ages: that makes no difference as to the fact that He loves me, and seeks me, and is not willing that I should perish, and resolves not to give up the search (so He Himself is pleased to represent it) until He find me. This is true, whether the clergy teach it or abstain from teaching it. Christ Himself taught it. Such doctrine, if received, will touch the flintiest heart. If we love Him now, it is because He first loved us, and revealed this love to our souls by His spirit. His tender, loving thoughts have tracked us, and watched over us, even when we have been at our worst. If we are living far away from Him now, nevertheless He loves us as His children, though His lost ones: He is seeking us: He would have us return that we may find everlasting rest in His love.

“Herein is love, not that we loved God, but that He loved us, and gave His Son to be the propitiation for our sins.” His Son! Think what an earthly father’s love is. David could say of the rebel Absalom,

“O Absalom! my son, my son Absalom! would God I had died *for* thee! O Absalom! my son, my son!” But an earthly father’s love is only a poor dim reflection of God’s love to “His offspring,” His children of mankind. What, then, must have been His love from eternity to his only-begotten Son, who is represented to our minds as *in the bosom of the Father*! One feels the weakness and poverty of human language, and even of human conceptions, never more than when attempting to deal with so transcendent a theme. And what follows? To what does this train of thought lead? Even to this. “He that spared not His own Son, but delivered Him up for *us all*, how shall He not, *with Him*, also freely give us all things?” What will He withhold from souls which were ransomed by the delivering up of His own Son? Nothing that they are capable of enjoying; true enjoyment being inseparable from holiness, that is, harmony with God and all goodness. Until those for whom the Son of God was delivered up cease to do evil and learn to do well, they are incapable of receiving the vast benefits which God is ready to bestow. The heart must be touched, melted, won by divine love. The will must bend. Conscience, God’s voice within, must be supreme. What is to bring about this revolution? Only the effectual working of the Holy Spirit. Will God withhold this for ever from souls that were ransomed by the precious blood of His own Son? Let this question be answered without evasion.

IV.

If ever a man was inspired by God, John the Baptist was. This inspired prophet, appointed to be the forerunner of the Messiah, and the herald of His advent, exclaimed, when he saw Jesus coming unto him, "Behold the Lamb of God, which *taketh away the sin of the world.*" This is the character, under which the Son of God, manifested in our nature, was proclaimed by His divinely-appointed harbinger. Could the purpose of His coming be announced more authoritatively or more clearly? It agrees exactly with what we read in the Epistle to the Hebrews, "Now once in the end of the world [rather in the crisis of the ages, or eternities—*aiōnōn* *] hath He appeared to put away sin by the sacrifice of Himself;" and it agrees exactly with the words of Isaiah, to which, I doubt not, the Baptist referred, "He is brought as a lamb to the slaughter." "But He was wounded for *our* transgressions." "The Lord hath laid on *Him* the iniquity of us *all.*"

Yet the full significance of the death of Christ as "the Lamb of God that taketh away the sin of the world," the Redeemer of the human race, was hidden even from His apostles, not only while their Master lay in the grave, but also after His resurrection and ascension. Nay more, after the outpouring of the Spirit upon the day of Pentecost, the apostles did not realize the extent of their commission to "go into all the world

* ἐπὶ συντελείᾳ τῶν αἰώνων (Heb. ix. 26).

and preach the Gospel to every creature." They not only *began* at Jerusalem, as they had been directed; but they continued for years to act on the theory that salvation was *only* for the Jews. The supernatural visions granted to St. Peter at Joppa, and to St. Paul on the way to Damascus, were as new revelations to the early church. They showed that the benefits of Christ's death were ordained, not for a sect or a nation only, but for every human being, from the first to the last. But, as if to show that the treasure is in earthen vessels, and that God has permitted the human element to mingle with the divine—for reasons which, we may rest assured, the event will one day justify—the apostles themselves, not excepting Peter, or even Paul,* kept on clinging more or less to Judaism. In the age after the apostles, Judaism was rampant; and a few centuries later, Judaism and Paganism, blended in a gorgeous ritual, had so obscured—may I not say, *caricatured*?—the Christian Gospel, that it must have perished utterly out of the world, had it not been Divine.

The leading spirits of the Reformation in the sixteenth century had, of course, been educated in the Church of Rome. Their ideas of systematic theology had been derived mainly from the Schoolmen and the Fathers. Logical completeness was, in the estimation of men thus trained, a matter of the first importance. The great problem with them, when they sat down to frame systems, was to find a theory of the Divine dispensations which should be consistent with every verse in the Bible,—with what they conceived to be the cardinal

* Acts xxi. 26, 27.

doctrines of Christianity, and with every known fact in the history of the human mind. It is hardly necessary to say, that no theory answering these conditions has yet been discovered. But the expedients resorted to by individuals and synods, for the purpose of investing Christianity with the forms of logic, have left their black marks on the theology of every church in Christendom to this day. As one consequence of this, a reaction has of late years been taking place throughout Protestant Europe; and in many cases Christianity itself has been openly rejected, because the logical forms grafted upon it broke down under examination. That this conclusion is itself most illogical, must be obvious to every competent inquirer. Christianity is not identical with, nor is it responsible for, the speculations of patristic or scholastic theologians. It is "the power of God unto salvation to every one that believeth," be his intellectual advantages or disadvantages what they may. But surely it is not a little startling to observe, that now, in the middle of the nineteenth century after Christ, the chief doctrinal difference between the Church of England and the Church of Scotland lies in the answer to the question, *For whom did Christ die?* and that, in our own Church of England itself, prominent writers give very different answers to the question, *What was the meaning or purpose of the death of Christ?*

That this state of things is to be deplored; that it might be to a considerable extent remedied; and that it tends to produce scepticism in the minds of those who watch the controversies, but have no opportunity of studying the subjects, cannot be denied. Many a one

very naturally says, If learned and sincere divines differ so widely on doctrines which involve the very essence of Christianity, how can I be sure that I have the right belief? One sees the force of this remark; but it is easy to see also its weakness. The Christian Religion is not a mere philosophy. Its principles are contained in a few facts and commands, which find a lodgment in honest and good hearts, and bring forth the good fruits of holy living, notwithstanding the most profound ignorance of speculative theology and of the history of opinions. Familiarity with so-called religious controversies, instead of greatly helping a man to be a practical Christian, is often a hindrance. Yet the science of theology, though distinct from practical Christianity, is to be cultivated by those who have the required capacity and opportunities; and such persons, though differing widely as to speculative statements, do not always excommunicate one another, even in thought. Thanks be to God! there is a growing charity in this respect, manifesting itself far and wide. Men who differ as to the theology even of the Atonement, trust in Christ as their only Saviour, and endeavour earnestly to follow His example. A few familiar verses of the English Bible contain all the essence of Christianity; and for us of the Church of England there can be no better commentary, perhaps, than the Prayer Book, which leaves much room for theoretical differences, and is at the same time a great aid to hearty devotion and practical godliness. Any person who can join honestly in the Communion Service must be a true Christian, whatever his speculative opinions, doubts, or difficulties may

be. Every essential of Christianity appears to be expressed in these three passages :—

“God so loved the world, that He gave His only-begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in Him should not perish, but have everlasting life” (St. John iii. xvi).

“He died for all, that they which live should not henceforth live unto themselves, but unto Him which died for them, and rose again” (2 Cor. v. 15).

“If any man sin, we have an advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous ; and He is the propitiation for our sins” (1 St. John ii. 1).

These familiar words (two of the texts are in our Communion Service)¹ contain the heart and soul of Christianity ; and, blessed be God ! they are a living power in the hearts of men who are even further asunder, as to speculative doctrine, than Dr. Candlish and Bishop Colenso. Yet it would be a monstrous mistake to suppose, either that the differences between these theologians are of no consequence, or that their magnitude justifies a doubt as to the claim of Christianity to be a Divine revelation.

“The Lamb of God, which taketh away the sin of the world,” “appeared to put away sin by the sacrifice of Himself ;” for “the Lord hath laid on Him the iniquity of us all.”

But the followers of Calvin say, that “the sin of the world” can mean only the sin of a *part* of the world, that is, of the elect. And the followers of Arminius hold, that “the sin of the world” can mean only a *part* of the sin of the world, viz. the sin that is thoroughly repented of before the hour of death. Both these views,

if I mistake not, flatly contradict the prophet Isaiah, John the Baptist, and the author of the Epistle to the Hebrews—contradict three divinely-inspired men on a point on which they are all agreed, that being the very point which makes the coming of Christ to be indeed a Gospel, or good news, to mankind.

These two systems, which, under various names, have divided the greater part of Christendom, are utterly destructive of the Gospel of Jesus Christ. If either of these systems were true, it must be a matter of everlasting regret to a man who tries to love his neighbour as himself, that the world and its inhabitants ever were created. And what are we to say of any system of opinion, that leads fairly to such a conclusion? Say of it? Why, that it contradicts every God-implemented instinct of our nature, in which all our ideas of religion have their roots; and more, that it contradicts the clearest announcements which the Scriptures contain of the purpose and result of our Saviour's advent.

If every sin that ever was, or ever will be, chargeable against the human race, including every member of it from the first man to the last, was not included in the atonement of Christ, was not laid upon Him by God, was not borne by Him upon the cross, was not taken away by Him, as to its deserved penalty, then I do not understand the meaning of such plain words as these:—"On Him was laid the iniquity of us all;" He "put away sin by the sacrifice of Himself;" "He is a propitiation for our sins, and not for ours only [not for the sins of the Jews, or the professing Church, or the elect only], but for the sins of the whole world;" "God

sent not His Son into the world to condemn the world, but that the world through Him might be saved ;” “ Behold the Lamb of God, which taketh away the sin of the world.” If any ingenuity of interpretation can make such language mean, either that the sins *only* of *some persons* were atoned for, or that *only some sins* were atoned for, then I say that the same ingenuity can make any words mean exactly the reverse of their obvious meaning, and that the exercise of such ingenuity, be the critics ever so respectable, ever so learned, ever so religious, can issue only in the perversion of truth.

But if “the sin of the world” has been “taken away,” as to its deserved penalty—if the sacrifice of “the Lamb of God” was intended to “put away sin”—if this propitiation for the sins of the whole world was accepted by God, and confirmed, ratified, put beyond all question, by the resurrection and ascension of our Lord—if in this widest possible sense Christ “redeemed me and all mankind,” as our Church Catechism truly says, following the words of Holy Writ, then the justice of God is our guarantee that each shall receive the benefits of this redemption, in as far as he is capable of receiving them, and as soon as he is capable of receiving them.

In order that one may be capable of receiving these spiritual benefits, some knowledge is necessary ; and, for want of a knowledge of Christianity, by far the greater part of the population of the globe, in past ages and down to this moment, have, during their lifetime, been incapable of realizing the benefits. But all history is under God’s control. To whom he will, He giveth knowledge ; from whom He will, He withholdeth it.

Are we to conclude that because, in His Providence, He has allowed nations to live and die in ignorance, He will for ever withhold from them the blessings which Christ purchased for them with His blood. God appeals to our reason, to our sense of justice. Can we conceive this to be just, either toward the Redeemer or toward the redeemed? And shall man cherish an opinion which imputes injustice to God? "What could have been done more to my vineyard, that I have *not* done in it? wherefore, when I looked that it should bring forth grapes, brought it forth wild grapes?" That was said to the house of Israel. But can it be addressed to the heathen? On the contrary, are not wild grapes the only fruit to be looked for from nations destitute of religious privileges—destitute, as they generally are, even of a knowledge of the world's history?

But does the teaching of the Lord Jesus Himself throw no light upon this subject? Does He not say distinctly, "If I had not come and spoken unto them, they had not had sin?" Does He not even go farther and say, "If I had not done among them the works which none other man did, they had not had sin?" This is just what we should have expected from the character of Christ. This is in harmony with the assurance, that "God is love." Here responsibility is divinely measured by opportunity. Christ has not yet come and spoken to the great masses of the heathen, either directly or by His messengers. He has not performed miracles among them, or made them acquainted with the story of His miracles performed in Palestine.

Therefore we have his own authority for saying that they are not chargeable with the sin of rejecting Him whom they have had no opportunity of knowing ; nay, more, that they are not answerable at the bar of God's justice for the general consequences of their involuntary ignorance ; ignorance which is not their fault but their misfortune—ignorance which is no more their fault than poverty is the fault of the children begotten of paupers and born in a workhouse. On this topic, then, the teaching of Christ is perfectly clear, and perfectly in harmony (as all His teaching is, when rightly understood) with the conclusions of reason and conscience.

And what does St. Paul say about this in his Epistle to the Romans ? “ When the Gentiles* (*ethne* = heathen) which have not the law, do by nature the things contained in the law, these, having not the law, are a law unto themselves : which show the work of the law written in their hearts, their conscience also bearing witness.” Here, again, is the same divine principle of equity laid down, that responsibility is measured by opportunity. The heathen who have not received the Divine law written in books shall be judged by another standard, viz., by the law written in their hearts.

But we know that salvation for the human race is only through Jesus Christ, its second head and representative. Yet “ how shall they believe in Him of whom they have not heard ? and how shall they hear without a preacher ? ” The great masses of the heathen never in this life hear Christ preached, and of course cannot believe in Him of whom they have not heard. Our

* *ἔθνη*, probably the very word from which *heathen* comes.

Lord himself teaches that they are not answerable for their rejection of Him since they know nothing of His doctrine or of his miracles.

Yet Christ is “a propitiation for the sins of the whole world;” for the sins of the heathen as well as for the sins of those called Christians.

Now the justice of God is our guarantee, that no soul which Christ hath purchased with His own blood will be shut out from the benefits of this redemption, except on account of perverse obstinacy; and that no soul will be excluded from the benefits one moment longer than the obstinacy lasts.

But *where* are the heathen to have the opportunity? Where are they to be rendered capable, by knowledge of Christ, of enjoying the benefits of the Gospel? Not in this life certainly, with a few exceptions. It must, therefore, be in the life to come. It is contrary to any conception we are able to form of Divine justice, that souls redeemed by the blood of Christ should be *left for ever ignorant of the fact* of their redemption, and *for ever incapable of accepting the benefits*.

But how important is this! The teaching of Christ and of St. Paul shows, what reason and conscience would lead us to expect, that *the probation of the heathen will extend into another life*. This cannot be evaded. Where are the Scriptures which speak of this life as the probation of the heathen, and of the next life as their reward? I desire to see them pointed out. If “the whole tenor of Scripture” conveys this doctrine, or anything like it, or anything reconcilable with it, there can be no difficulty in producing these strong reasons.

They will be found, I believe, to be like the proof-texts in the Westminster Assembly's Shorter Catechism, equally to the point, and equally conclusive.

A principal proof adduced to show that death closes probation to every soul is this from Eccl. (ch. iii.), "If the clouds be full of rain, they empty themselves upon the earth : and if the tree fall toward the south, or toward the north, *in the place where the tree falleth, there it shall be.* He that observeth the wind shall not sow ; and he that regardeth the clouds shall not reap." I have given the context to show how the words italicised have been wrenched from their connexion by some system-builder, and made to support the devilish dogma that every one who dies a heathen shall remain to all eternity a heathen, and shall through all eternity be kept burning alive in unquenchable fire, on account of Adam's first sin and the poor victim's own heathenism. All the cruelties of all the inhuman monsters whose names disgrace the page of history, multiplied a million times, are less than a grain of sand to the universe, in comparison with the cruelty and injustice here attributed to the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ. This is the old Westminster divinity of the seventeenth century, now recognized in the form of rusty manacles and fetters by which the ministers north of the Tweed are chained to the Kirk of Scotland ; and the divinity of the great body of English "Evangelicals" (*lucus a non lucendo*) seems to be at this hour very much the same, except that it is less ferocious and less logical, and under obligations to stand by the Liturgy and Articles in some sense or other. Is it a wonder that infidelity spreads ?

Where a tree falls there shall it lie, until some one strong enough shall lift it up. But what is to hinder it from being lifted at the proper time, and turned to the east or west, or north or south, and shaped into timber for a house or for a temple? The argument must be hopeless that needs to be propped up by the fallen tree in this passage. Why do not the commentators go on and tell us that, since it is written, "He that observeth the wind shall not sow, and he that regardeth the clouds shall not reap," it will be impossible for a meteorologist to become a successful farmer?

If I have made myself understood, it must be obvious that the words of Christ and Paul, when taken in connexion with the oft-repeated truth that "Christ died for all," lead to the unavoidable conclusion, that the probation and instruction of the heathen will extend into a future dispensation. But are there no heathen in Christian lands? The most benighted savage in the heart of Africa cannot be more ignorant of the real meaning of Christianity than are tens of thousands in London and Paris and other large cities of Christian Europe. They are born to a dark inheritance of ignorance and crime. If responsibility is in proportion to opportunity—and that is a principle which our Lord lays down in various forms and with unmistakable plainness—then these outcasts, who live in the shadows of churches which they have never entered, and millions who are brought up in the dense ignorance of such Christian countries as Spain, Portugal, Mexico, and parts of Ireland, France, Italy, and Austria, will

be dealt with on the same principle as the millions and millions of avowed pagans.

In short, everything in history goes to show that the loving children of God in the present dispensation are comparatively few; that there is an election to glory and honour, as well as immortality, now taking place out of the nations; that this age is only introductory to that of the kingdom of heaven upon earth, which the Lord will establish when He comes to reign; that under His reign ignorance shall be instructed, and growing righteousness will abound; and that the day is coming (incalculably distant though it may be) when every intelligent creature in heaven, and on earth, and under the earth, and upon the sea, shall "confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father."

If the extent of the atonement is not a subject of interest to us, we are selfish, and living in sinful indifference to the welfare of our neighbour whom we are bound to love. If we do not care to anticipate the predicted results of the atonement, we cannot be cherishing that spirit of love which was in Christ. It is impossible for us to have a true idea of the character of our Father who is in heaven, if we take for granted all the horrid assertions that darken the pages even of eminent divines, without searching out for ourselves what He has revealed concerning the grandeur of His purpose, and the unfailing certainty of His methods. Without love to God and to our neighbour, though we give our bodies to be burned, as adherents of a creed, our religion is vain and profiteth us nothing. If a man love not his brother whom he hath seen, how can he love God whom he hath not seen?

V.

Christ is not dead. He ever liveth. He did not cease to teach, when His human voice ceased to be audible, as He was received into the cloud that hovered over Mount Olivet. Not only is He alive evermore, and seated at the right hand of God making intercession for us: He is teaching us by His spirit every day, if we will but listen. If Christ were dead, Christianity must have died ages ago. Many of its precepts are far from being agreeable to our natural inclinations. Crucifying the flesh with its affections and lusts, never has been popular. Giving up our prejudices and preferences for the sake of him who is *the truth*, never has been popular; and it never will be popular till the spirit of the living God shall have turned the hearts of the people, as the rivers of water are turned by the upheavals of the earthquake. But Christianity, unpopular as it must be, in its purity, while the world continues selfish and self-indulgent, is the greatest power in the world at this moment, because the omnipotent energy of the ever-living Saviour of the world is working *through* it; because He who rose from the dead on the third day is alive now at the helm of universal empire, guiding the destinies of His Church, and the destinies of nations, communities, families, and individuals, and overruling all things by the word of His power. The march of events under the Divine government is stately, grand, and slow. Without impatience (which is a mere infirmity of our mortal nature), with

the serene calmness of Deity, the Messiah is waiting, till in the gradual unfolding of the eternal scheme His enemies shall be made His footstool; and waiting, too, for that yet more remote fulfilment of the Divine counsels,—that glorious hour over which we can conceive the morning stars singing together, and all the sons of God, even in worlds not yet descried by human eye, shouting for joy,—the hour at which the mediatorial dispensations shall close, because completed, and God shall be “all in all.”

Yes, our living Lord, who created heaven and earth, our bodies, our minds, and all the blessed adaptations by which we are everywhere surrounded, is the foundation, the very corner stone of the foundation, of all our faith and all our hopes. The divinity of His person and of His character is our security that we shall not be confounded. Jesus Christ is “the same yesterday, to-day, and for ever.” The church changes her phases, waxing and waning, like the moon, to which in Scripture she is compared. But God in Christ says, “I am the Lord, I change not.” The church alters her doctrines from time to time. She teaches for doctrines the commandments of men. She melts the old doctrines in her crucible, and runs them into her new moulds. What passes in many places for Christianity now, is so different from anything taught by Christ and His apostles, that it may be truly called a new religion. Christ’s religion is called good news, tidings of great joy. What many preach as this gospel is the most dreadful news that ever fell upon mortal ears,—the heaviest, the most terrible tidings that ever crushed and rent a human heart.

Suppose a missionary preaching to an assembly of Chinese, who are remarkable for their affection toward their parents. He takes for his text, "This is the stone which was set at nought of you builders, which is become the head of the corner. Neither is there salvation in any other : for there is none other name under heaven given among men whereby we must be saved" (Acts iv. 11, 12). Suppose him, in discoursing on this text, to proceed thus : You see from these words that Christianity is the only true religion, and *therefore* that your ancestors, and all your dead relatives and friends, because they did not believe in the name of Christ, are now in a state of "everlasting separation from the comfortable presence of God," and are destined to suffer "most grievous torments in soul and body, without intermission, in hell-fire for ever : " (the words of that bad book, the Westminster Confession). But I have come to tell you how *you* may escape this awful doom. Rejoice, then, over this gospel ; for I am here to announce to you, that, although your departed relations, having died in ignorance of the news, are now undoubtedly in hell, burning with the rich man spoken of in Christ's parable, you yourselves may, by obeying my exhortation, reach heaven. And you ought to rejoice the *more* over the privilege of listening to my message, when I tell you that not your heathen ancestors only, but probably, at least, nine-tenths of the population of the world in all ages, have already entered upon the endless misery which *you* have now an opportunity of escaping.

What a gospel !

Suppose now that one of the Chinese auditors were to answer thus: How can I love, or reverence, or respect a Being who has punished, is now punishing, and will everlastingly punish my ancestors in unquenchable flames, for not believing in a Saviour of whom they never heard? You say that the God of the Christians is the only true God, the Creator of heaven and earth, and my Creator. That *cannot* be, if what you tell me concerning Him is true. My soul has been created in such a manner that it respects, and must always respect, justice. He who teaches me, and every man, to respect justice, must Himself be just. But you represent the God of the Christians as unjust. My whole nature revolts against the omnipotent cruelty which you ascribe to Him. Your doctrine does not commend itself to my reason or my conscience. I must be a most selfish and contemptible wretch, if my thoughts were confined to my own *personal* escape from the doom of which you speak, while I acquiesced in the pre-ordained, inevitable, and everlasting torture of the greater part of the race to which I belong. What you call heaven, would be no heaven to me, if I must for ever associate only with persons of your opinions, unless the constitution of my whole nature be changed, so that wrong shall seem right, tyranny seem justice, and the most atrocious cruelty seem fatherly affection. I, therefore, cannot receive the Christian religion, if I must believe what you say concerning the dealings of the Christian's God with whole nations and generations of human creatures whom He himself has left in ignorance.

Which, now, has the better side of the argument—

the Christian or the heathen? *I* say the heathen; because the Christian teacher has misrepresented Christianity, wrested from his text a meaning which it never was intended to convey, contradicted plain statements of our Lord and His apostles, and promulgated a theory which is abhorrent to the universal conscience and reason of mankind, as well as to the written revelation contained in the Bible. Sects arise, and doctrines change, and private theories are grafted upon primitive Christianity; and sincere men teach the most abominable falsehoods, in the ignorant belief that they are doing God service, and that they and those who agree with them are the only lights of the world, and that all who differ from them are of course walking in darkness. But although what is human in the Church is continually changing, the Divine Head of the Church is ever the same. As "the true light which lighteth every man," He has shone, more or less clearly, in every soul that ever tenanted a human body. In the darkest spot of heathendom, and in the darkest period of its annals, that Divine light has never failed. It has often been more truly followed by heathens, who knew not the name of Christ, than by Christians who were baptized into His name. Christianity is professed by some in almost every corner of the world. But where are the Christians? Where are the consistent followers of the meek and lowly Jesus? Alas, how few! Many are most loving and amiable till you begin to point out their errors, or trespass on what they consider to be their preserve. Then they blaze up like gunpowder, and the old nature comes out darkly, and it becomes

plain that there is a form of selfishness hiding somewhere. It may not be a wedge of gold, nor shekels of silver, nor a goodly Babylonish garment, that is concealed under the tent or tabernacle. But if it is some narrow dogma that enshrines their pride, it is still selfishness, though under a religious disguise. The disguise may deceive themselves, even more than it deceives others: but that does not alter the fact. It is still selfishness under a disguise. This is our infirmity. We are all verily guilty—all, from the highest dignitaries down to the old women who come to church for the sake of sixpences and penny loaves. Bless God that when Christ died for our sins, our inconsistencies were included in His atonement. If we *endeavour*, however lamely, to walk in His light, His blood cleanseth us from *all* sin. Consistent Christians are few; sincere Christians are undoubtedly many. Wherever there are human souls seeking after God, seeking rest and peace and permanent enjoyment in God, it is Christ who is leading them, and it is in Christ that they will find what their empty hearts are craving. How few persons in the world know the anatomy of the human heart! yet the hearts of all living go on beating, notwithstanding this ignorance, which is nearly universal. In like manner, though comparatively few are acquainted with Christian doctrine, the work of God in the souls of men is going on. The candle of the Lord is shining in them. The love of God is drawing them. The voice of God is remonstrating with them, just as if they knew all the systems of dead and living divinity, and all the hard names that describe mental and spiritual states and processes.

VI.

Concerning our first parents before the Fall, we know little else than this, that "God created man in His own image." Their whole history in Genesis is very short. It is not said how long they continued innocent. It is not said whether their minds were furnished with any knowledge when they were created, or whether they had only a capacity for acquiring it. It is not said whether God gave them a language, or left them to invent one for themselves. In the narrative, God is indeed represented as *speaking* to Adam and Eve, and they are represented as answering. Even the serpent is represented as speaking. But there are various reasons why this cannot be taken literally. At all events, there is a great revelation in the words, "God created man in His own image." Terrible as the consequences of sin have been, it has not destroyed that image. The gold has become dim, and the most fine gold changed; but the glory has not altogether departed. Christ is still "the true light which lighteth every man that cometh into the world." This last text is a terrible stumbling-block to some sectaries. They would move heaven and earth to get it expunged from the Bible, or neutralized, or explained away. But the supremacy of conscience is unquestionable, although practically it is not in general obeyed. The candle of the Lord shines in the breasts of multitudes who live in habitual and deliberate sin. The still small voice is heard even there, amid the tumult of passions ungoverned, and the

din of anxieties that will not sleep. Our first parents were originally sinless and happy. By disobedience, human nature became selfish, greedy, discontented, quarrelsome, and, in proportion as the lower passions were allowed to usurp dominion, wretched. The mind of man is a great kingdom in rebellion against its lawful sovereign. It is continually disturbed by lawless bands, and torn by internal feuds. Anarchy prevails, and there is no real peace or comfort anywhere throughout the scene of revolt. Still it is a great kingdom. All it needs is the restoration of good government. The elements of greatness are still there, as of old, and will begin to develope in proportion as law and order are established. No believer in Christianity ought to despair of human nature. He who created that nature has taken it upon Himself, on purpose to raise it to participation in the Divine nature—to everlasting union with God. “He is not willing that any should perish,” of a race created in the Divine image and redeemed by the incarnate Son.

The practical value of knowing that “God created man in His own image,” is immense. The mirror is soiled and broken, and the reflection is far from being clear, as it was at first. But the imperfect reflection that remains is of the greatest consequence. Without it, the Bible would be of no use to us: the revelations contained in it would be unintelligible. “God is love.” But we know not what that means, till it is illustrated by reflections in the broken mirror. “If ye, being evil, know how to give good gifts unto your children, how much more shall your Father which is in heaven

give good things to them that ask Him." We look into our hearts, and at once understand that argument. "There is no God else beside me, a just God, and a Saviour" (Is. xlv. 21). "*Just*"—what does that mean? The reflection of God's image in my soul, imperfect though that reflection undoubtedly is, gives the only explanation.*

Now, if I am informed that God created *one soul*, clearly knowing (as the Omniscient) that it must burn for ever in unquenchable fire, or suffer such endless misery as that is believed to represent, I ask myself, Can this be the Being of whom it is written in Holy Scripture, "God is love"—"a just God"—who "will have all men to be saved;"—"the Lord is good to all (loving unto every man) and His tender mercies are over all His works;"—"God sent not His Son into the world to condemn the world, but that the world through Him might be saved;"—"the living God who is the Saviour of all men!" I look into my own soul, where God's image is in some degree reflected, and ask myself,—Can this information be true of the God who made *me*? Can this be true of the God who was revealed in "Christ, the Saviour of the world?" My whole mind answers instantly, *Impossible!* And the same answer will arise in the breast of any honest man, whose nature has not been warped and twisted by systemolatry.

Suppose that I have power to create a butterfly. I need not create it unless I choose; but I do create it,

* Mr. Ruskin has some excellent remarks on this subject, in "Modern Painters."

with the intention of burning it as slowly as I can in the flame of a candle, after it shall have taken its first flight in the sunshine. What do I deserve to be called? An incarnate fiend.

But the poor fly's torture is over in less than a minute. The soul in unquenchable fire is to be tortured, we are told, for more centuries than there are particles of matter in the solar system ; and is to be, at the termination of that inconceivable period, no nearer the end of its sufferings than when the sufferings began.

It is horrid blasphemy to say that God created *one* human being for such a purpose as this. What, then, is to be said of the dogma, that God with this design created the whole human race, except "some particular persons, whom He pleased, and but the smaller number?"*

Whatever modifications of statement may be adopted by particular schools or individuals, those who maintain that the torments to be endured in a future state, by human beings unrenewed before death, will be absolutely endless, are all in the same dilemma. They must abandon their dogma, or contradict conscience, reason, and revelation.

VII.

There are scores of texts in Holy Writ that express the same sense as the following :—"God sent not His Son into the world to condemn the world, but that the world through Him might be saved." Saved from

* Election—Brown's Dictionary of the Bible.

what? From sin and its consequences. Saved *for* what? For glory, honor, and immortality—for joint-heirship with Christ of an inheritance that can never be disputed, or wasted, or lost. And whose words are these which have been quoted? The words of the Son of God Himself. Are we, then, to take them just as they stand, without qualification or drawback? Undoubtedly. Why should we modify, or alter, or abate their force? There is not one sentence in the Bible that really contradicts them. If any passages appear to do so, it must be in appearance only. If a text did contradict words spoken by Christ, ought we to receive it as divine? No; anything rather than that.

It may be urged that our Saviour says in the very next verse: "He that believeth not is condemned already." But is there any contradiction there? Does "condemned already" mean condemned *everlastingly*, without remedy, without hope? Many who did not believe when our Lord uttered these words undoubtedly believed afterwards. Did they continue under condemnation notwithstanding their change of mind? Surely not. They were under condemnation so long as they rejected the Messiah, but not one moment longer. So that, although every one who at present rejects the Saviour is for that reason under condemnation, it is an utter perversion of Scripture to say that he is condemned irretrievably, and for ever.

One should think it must be a clear point, that God never undertakes what it would be either wrong or impossible to accomplish; and, therefore, that He never has a purpose which He will not in due season carry

out. If God had sent His Son into the world to condemn the world, then that would have been His purpose ; and we may rest assured that it would have been carried out. But the Messiah Himself declares that this was *not* the Divine purpose, but that the Divine purpose was the very reverse. Can we doubt, then, that this purpose, not of judgment, but of mercy, shall be fulfilled, especially when we remember that “He delighteth in mercy,” and that judgment is “His strange work.”

Observe now the reach, the comprehensiveness, of this Divine purpose, announced in simple and unmistakeable terms by the son of God himself: “that *the world* through him might be saved.” Many nations of the world, through a long series of generations, had lived and died before this good news was proclaimed. But *although they were dead they were not excepted*. God’s purpose to save the world included *them*. Christ did not say “that the world, from the date of my advent, might be saved.” There was no such limitation. The benefit was to extend backward as well as forward. Again, there was no limitation as to the time within which the Divine purpose of mercy was to be fulfilled. Christ did not say, that the world through Him might be saved immediately, or within a given number of years or centuries, or during the present age or dispensation. Nothing of the kind. Such limitations, and others, which utterly destroy the meaning of the Divine purpose, are the inventions of the commentators who, having no glimpse of the grandeur of the Divine scheme, introduced the limitations to account for what they sup-

posed to be otherwise inexplicable. Christ laid down a negative, and an affirmative, that there might be no excuse for misapprehension. He declared what the Divine purpose was not; and He declared what the Divine purpose was. Yet the voices of the people, ever echoing tradition, are with the commentators, and against the Word of God. The scribes carry the day against the Lord's own proclamation; and the Gospel, as the Saviour himself delivered it, is branded as dangerous doctrine!

Christ's teaching was denounced as dangerous doctrine by the rulers of the Jews eighteen hundred years ago, and they put Him to death on account of it. They did not think that publicans, and sinners, and Samaritans ought to be treated otherwise than with contempt or abhorrence. Yet when God sent his Son, His purpose was "not to condemn" even publicans, sinners, and Samaritans, but that "the world"—including these as well as the better classes of society—might be saved. Yet we do not anywhere read that Christ's kindness to sinners was ever taken to be an encouragement to sin, or that it ever had the effect of inducing any to go on in sin.

Orthodoxy (so-called), half-asleep in its cushioned pew, expects—what? That the clergy shall stand up, Sunday after Sunday, grinding away at a few familiar dogmas and cant phrases, like popular tunes on a barrel-organ. Alas! all the popular tunes are not Divine music. Many strains are the artificial product of the schools, the wonderful feats of contrapuntists. Whatever is good in them is God's; but much is false, and

discordant, and contrary to the laws of Divine harmony. God's music never had a beginning, and it never will have an end; and it is marked by infinite variety. We cannot take it in as a whole. But the discords are all resolved: the harmony absorbs them, rolls over them, drowns them. All we can do here is to open the soul's windows, in each of which God has set his *Æolian* harp; and over the golden strings his Spirit will sweep, awakening such chords, such perfect harmonies, such heavenly music, as human genius never could discover, and the scales of art never could express. The strains are too deep, too grand, too vast, too celestial, for us to understand and appreciate them fully; but as the spiritual ear becomes more cultivated, the divine music will be better understood. Often one hears the words of Holy Writ borne sweetly into his listening soul with a new meaning, or a fulness of meaning undreamed of before. Often the divine strains are "songs without words,"—grand symphonies that carry thought and feeling up into the seventh heaven with aspirations which no words can reach, which no language of earth can touch without degrading.

We all profess to believe in the teaching of the Holy Spirit. We say that the Spirit is the true Interpreter of Holy Writ. Have we not all been baptized into the same Spirit? Are we not all made welcome to His teaching, if we will but listen? Is the Spirit of God confined to the authors of Commentaries and Bodies of Divinity? Ought we not ourselves to go personally to the Fountain Head? Ought we not, with earnest prayer, to ask for Divine enlightenment, to believe that

we are heard, and to wait for the answer? Never was prayer offered which God more willingly attended to. He is always more ready to hear than we to pray, if we will but take Him at His word. But our scruples, and doubts, and difficulties, and delays, and multiform sins, block up the way; and, instead of seeking counsel of God, men turn with more confidence—literally *with more confidence*—to Matthew Henry, or Thomas Scott.

VIII.

A great part of Christian theology is based upon the writings of St. Paul. If no books of Scripture had come down to us, except his epistles, our systems of divinity would probably have been much the same as they now are. Yet it may be safely affirmed, that no writings ever were more misrepresented than those of the Jew of Tarsus who became the apostle of the Gentiles.

All that is distinctive in Christianity may be classed under two leading ideas,—the *Fall*, and the *Redemption*.

The Lord God said to Adam, with reference to the forbidden fruit, “In the day that thou eatest thereof, thou shalt surely *die*.”

The serpent said unto the woman, “Ye shall *not* surely die.”

Our first parents did eat the forbidden fruit. (This I take to be an *allegorical* account of a real transaction). What was the result? In the day on which they ate it, did they really die, in the literal and common signification of the word? No. Did God remit their sentence? No. There is not a hint of any such thing in

the Scripture narrative. If literal death had been the sense of the threatening, should we not reasonably look for some explanation of its non-fulfilment? Do we find any? None. The Lord God is represented as calling unto Adam, questioning him and the woman, drawing from both a confession of their guilt (but not a single word that implied penitence), and then pronouncing sentence, first upon the serpent, then upon the woman, and lastly upon Adam. "Unto Adam he said, Cursed is the ground for thy sake; in sorrow shalt thou eat of it all the days of thy life: thorns also and thistles shall it bring forth to thee; and thou shalt eat the herb of the field. In the sweat of thy face shalt thou eat bread till thou return unto the ground; (for out of it wast thou taken; for dust thou art, and unto dust thou shalt return"). This last clause appears to be no part of the sentence, but merely explanatory of the fact, that his body must ultimately return to the dust.

This sentence, it will be observed, is something quite different from a literal fulfilment of the threat. The threat could have been fulfilled literally only by the immediate death of the transgressors on that very day; as Ananias and Sapphira were struck dead.

What then? Was the divine threatening not really fulfilled? Is there any reason for supposing that God, in this case, departed from his purpose? None. The sentence which was pronounced evidently contains what was intended by the warning, "Thou shalt surely die." What follows? Plainly this, that the death threatened was not literal death, but *spiritual* death—not the separation of soul and body, but the spiritual death

of the *soul* in trespasses and sins. All the days of Adam's life were to be days of sorrow, the very ground being under a curse on account of his sin. And sorrow and subjection were to be the punishment of Eve. So long as their souls had been spiritually alive toward God, they knew no sorrow. As soon as spiritual death overtook them, sorrow became immediately their punishment and their portion. Then they are represented as driven out of the garden by God Himself, to prevent their eating of the tree of life.

The serpent said, "Ye shall not surely die." Did the serpent speak the truth? The threatening was *not* fulfilled literally. But the serpent well knew its real meaning; for he said, "God doth know that in the day ye eat thereof, then your eyes shall be opened; and ye shall be as gods, *knowing good and evil*." The serpent was aware that spiritual death must be the instant effect of their knowledge of *evil*.

Now turn to St. Paul. In his Epistle to the Romans, he draws a parallel (already referred to) between the ruin caused by Adam, and the redemption wrought out by Christ, whom the apostle calls the second Adam, or "the second man," because He was the second head and representative of the human race. Just before instituting this comparison, the apostle says (v. 12), "By one man sin entered into the world, and death by sin; and so death passed upon all men, for that all have sinned."

Century after century, theologians have interpreted the word *death* in this place to mean the literal death of the body. But we know with perfect certainty,

from evidence which cannot be opposed, that literal death entered into the world ages upon ages before the creation of the human race. We have only to point to the fossil remains of thousands of races of animals in the deep-lying rocks, to prove that death reigned upon this earth for immense periods of time before any creature appeared who *could* be guilty of sin. So that literal death could not have been introduced into the world by Adam's transgression. We have not the shadow of a reason for supposing that the constitution of the human body was suddenly altered when our first parents by disobedience fell. The human body, in its present state, never was designed for immortality. Man, as an animal, must in any case have died. His body must have returned to the dust. But *spiritual* death did enter into the world by sin. *That* was the penalty really denounced against transgression; and the penalty ensued. And, because Adam was our representative-head, his posterity inherited the consequences.

It is true of every one of us, that "we have borne the image of the earthy." "Adam begat a son in his own likeness, after his image." The image of God meant a certain mental character; and the image of Adam means, not merely a physical resemblance, but also a certain mental character. "The heart of the sons of men is full of evil"—"deceitful above all things and desperately wicked." The Bible and experience teach this lesson distinctly and constantly. In fact, we inherit the penalty incurred by Adam; "being dead in trespasses and sins" until God revives and renews us.

We are estranged from God, the Fountain of Life, until He turns us to Himself, and quickens us by His spirit.

This might seem hard, although analogous to what we observe in families every day—that we should inherit evil consequences from a relationship into which we did not voluntarily enter: I do not believe that under the just government of God it could have taken place except as *one part* of a scheme, of which the other part is redemption. But here comes the Gospel. “Where sin abounded, grace did much more abound.” Yet few will believe it, few even of the clergy. They cannot bring themselves to believe that the grace and mercy of God abound more than the sins of man. Oxford and Cambridge divinity is not broad enough for so large a truth. Even bishops and archbishops are staggered at its magnitude. Yet every educated and thoughtful person, whose heart is not a fragment of the nether-millstone, must be conscious of an occasional leaning towards it. I appeal to members of the Universities *in foro conscientie*.

That the word *death* is used to signify a spiritual condition, is obvious to every reader of the Bible. “He that loveth not his brother, abideth in death.” “We know that we have passed from death unto life, because we love the brethren.” “Awake thou that sleepest, and arise from the dead, and Christ shall give thee light.” (Here *death* stands for *darkness*, light being the blessing needed.) “To be carnally-minded is death.”

Now St. Paul’s great doctrine—whether men will hear or whether they will forbear—is this: that, as through the sin of Adam, *spiritual death* came upon the

race, so, through the righteousness of Christ, *spiritual life* comes to the race, however slowly it may be developed. But old Calvinism, with its progeny of the second and third generation, cannot stand an hour in the presence of such doctrine. The difficulty is therefore evaded, the sense of a large portion of Scripture altered, and the universality of the Gospel narrowed to the dimensions of sectarian prejudice, to meet the requirements of a theory. And this is managed by teaching that the real parallel is only between *literal* death and *literal* resurrection. Now, it is quite true that, as descendants of Adam, who was a mortal man from the beginning, all (except Enoch, Elijah, and those who are to be suddenly changed at the second advent) must die literally, as animals die. And it is true that, in Christ, as our second head and risen Saviour, all who die literally shall be *raised* from the dead literally, as He arose. But this is only *part* of the truth, and the less important part. The parallel runs not merely between *literal* death and *literal* resurrection, but also between *spiritual* death and *spiritual* resurrection. "As in Adam all die, even so in Christ shall all be made alive." Moreover, "As by one man sin entered into the world, and death by sin; and so death passed upon all men, for that all have sinned;" "Therefore, as by the offence of one [Adam] all men are brought into a state of condemnation, so by the obedience of one [Christ] all men are brought into a state of justification and life. For as by the one man's disobedience the many were made sinners, so, by the obedience of the One, the many [*i.e.* the same persons, viz. *all mankind*] shall be

made righteous. The law was introduced that the offence might abound [that abounding transgression might make those, who desired to obey the law, feel their need of the gospel]. But where sin abounded, grace did much more abound. That as sin hath reigned, in the death [*i.e.* the spiritual death of the race], so also grace might reign, through righteousness, unto eternal life, by Jesus Christ our Lord." Mr. Young, as quoted by Dr. S. T. Bloomfield, to whose Greek Testament I refer, says with reference to the above passage: "Looking over the comparison, as now completed, we may observe that the principal terms are four on each side; thus—

Adam—Transgression—Condemnation—Death.

Christ—Obedience—Justification—Life.

So that the result of the *inference* drawn at v. 12 is—"Wherefore, as by the offence of Adam, condemnation and death came upon all men; even so, by the obedience of Christ, the second Adam, justification and eternal life were restored to all men."

It seems hardly necessary to write one word more, if Scripture testimony is to have any weight. If Calvinism were true, St. Paul's view must be false. If Calvinism were true, it *could not* be true that "where sin abounded grace did *much more* abound," because grace, according to that system, is given by God only to the elect few. Can Paul and Calvin stand together? Which system is more consistent with the eternal truth that "God is love?"

IX.

What has been said proves conclusively, among other things, that the redeemed race of man is no longer under the headship of Adam, but under the headship of Christ. How otherwise could it be true that the race has been redeemed? How otherwise could it be true that Christ tasted death for every man—that He is “the Saviour of all men,”—“the Saviour of the world?” As if to put this matter for ever beyond a question, St. Paul says distinctly, “I would have you know, that *the head of every man is Christ*” (1 Cor. xi. 3).

A word is the expression or image of something unseen existing in the mind. Christ the Divine word is the expression or image of the unseen Deity himself, the first origin and fountain of all mind, all thought. Christ is “the brightness of the Father’s glory, and the express image of His person, upholding all things by the word of His power.” We have seen what the mind of God is toward His creatures of mankind. We have ascertained the purpose for which the Divine word became visible upon earth, dwelling among us in the flesh as a man, making His voice heard, first in a corner of Palestine, and then, by His messengers, to the ends of the world. He came to save mankind not only from the painful effects of sin, but from sin itself,—not merely from misery present and future, but from all the causes of misery. But who introduced sin and misery upon the earth? An angel created by the Divine Word, Christ our Saviour, with the clear foreknowledge of all

that was to follow, but with the equally clear fore-ordination of the remedy which He himself would supply. (It has been shown that such words as foreknowledge, fore-ordination, etc., are not strictly correct when applied to God, who has no relations to time as past, present, and future. But we cannot avoid using the terms, or their equivalents, in order that our finite minds may have distinct conceptions of events which to us must appear in succession). When the Divine Word created Satan an angel of light, He, the Omniscient, knew that this glorious creature would become an angel of darkness, would rebel against Himself, would tempt a race not yet called into existence, would bring sin and suffering and woe, into this world of ours,—would do, in short, all the evil he has done, and is yet to do. But the Divine Word, the image of the invisible Deity, also determined that where sin abounded grace should *much more* abound: and this helps us, in no small degree, toward the solution of that riddle of riddles which has puzzled reflecting men from the first dawn of human thought—the permission of evil; and it pours a flood of light, as from a door opened in heaven, on a text which reveals to us the final deliverance of all God's creatures: "For this purpose the Son of God was manifested, that He might destroy the works of the devil."

And who shall presume to say, in the face of this, that they are *not* to be destroyed?—as if the Divine Word, who created, had created a power beyond His control!—as if the express plan and purpose of the Creator would be thwarted, frustrated, everlastingly nullified by His

own creatures!—as if the infinite, omniscient, omnipotent, unchangeable God could be baffled and disappointed!—as if it would not be impiety to say, “For this purpose,” indeed, “the Son of God was manifested, that he might destroy the works of the devil;” but the Son of God will not succeed in effecting His purpose—the works of the devil will never be destroyed. On the contrary, there will be a place in the universe set apart for the *endless development* of sin and misery, and all the works of the devil. Millions and millions of human creatures, whom Christ came to save, never, through all eternity, *can* be saved, even by Him. And this doomed multitude includes, not only the respectable infidels with ten talents, with great opportunities, with bibles and prayer-books and churches and schools and clergy, but countless infants and idiots and lunatics and pagans, and the unnumbered heathen of Christian lands, who have never seen the inside of a church, or a school, or a bible,—who have never heard the name of God or of Jesus Christ except in imprecations,—who have been cradled and nurtured and trained in the midst of open vice or daring crime. If the large class of comfortable Christians, who write tracts misnamed “evangelical,” are correct in their “views,” it would be infinitely better for nine hundred and ninety-nine out of every thousand of the human beings who have lived on the face of this earth that they had never been born; infinitely better for them if there had been no Gospel,—if the God of Christians had been a myth of the imagination. What does the voice of God in our breasts answer to such teaching as this? Is this Christianity, or is it impiety?

Let me speak boldly, as I ought to speak. We talk of the devil-worship of the poor Africans, and we send missionaries to instruct them. But what religion is this? If this be Christianity, let my tongue cleave to the roof of my mouth when I ask any one to believe it!

Such doctrine is not true. Were I standing before all the bishops in Christendom, I would dare to say, in the name of God, and with the open Bible before me, that the doctrine is not true. "I would have you know that the head of every man is Christ," and that the Gospel, proclaimed by angels and taught by Christ and His apostles, is not a curse to the world, but a blessing.

If it be said that I am over-stating the case, I can refer to volume after volume of modern theology calling itself orthodox. A Christian minister, a popular writer, a well-known quarterly reviewer, says in a book published not very long since: "For my part, I fancy I should not grieve if the whole race of mankind died in its fourth year. As far as *we* can see [*i.e.* himself and his co-religionists] I do not know that it would be a thing much to be lamented." He seems to hope—and in this he goes beyond many of his brethren—that infants will be saved if they die under four years of age; but to apprehend that, if they survive a year longer, they run a great risk of being burned for ever, body and soul, in unquenchable fire. What does his amazing statement amount to, if not to this, that the sooner the human race becomes extinct, the better? Can he, then, really believe in the goodness and wisdom of God who continues the species? Nay, I demand farther, can he believe in the goodness and wisdom of God who *created*

the species under circumstances which justify such opinions? Then what becomes of the Gospel? Can it be true that "God is love," and that He "will have all men to be saved?" To what does the gentleman's doctrine lead? Either to devil-worship on the one hand, or to blank atheism on the other.

"The head of every man is Christ." He made atonement for every sin, from the first that was committed to the last that shall be. This is redemption. Atonement having been made for all, its benefits must accrue to all, however long the perverseness of the human will may retard the blessing. Was not that perverseness atoned for? Was not that corrupt will redeemed? If so, must not Satan, in the end, yield to his Conqueror? That Conqueror is Christ, "the head of every man," the Divine head of humanity, which, in virtue of that headship, He is pledged to raise to various degrees of participation in the Divine nature. This is what He undertook, and this is what He will do. And if we view the whole case from a standpoint anywhere near that of St. Paul, we shall perceive a wondrous harmony, a Divine beauty, a boundless love in all the works and ways of God in which we are interested. But we cannot see these things if we continue to lie terror-stricken before false representations of God, the coarse daubings of priestly art, handed down to us from some of the darkest periods of the Church's history. We must endeavour to follow the apostle up to the heights from which he takes his survey. We must turn our back upon the idolatries, the lying inventions of ecclesiastical tradition, patristic or mediæval,

and go up with Paul into the mount of God, where the springs are from which the living waters flow. Standing there, by the fountains, we shall see, as Paul saw, that Christ is indeed “the Saviour of all men, especially of them that believe;” that this life is to us the first of a series of dispensations; that they who believe now, and act upon their belief, are elected by God out of mankind to be kings and priests unto God, to sit upon thrones, to have part in the first resurrection, and to be the assessors of Christ in the judgment: but that “the *nations* of them that are saved” shall not be advanced to such dignity; that they shall constitute the masses in the coming kingdom of Christ, to be governed, instructed, and blessed through the elect saints; and that those who hated the light, whether of conscience or of revelation, and who lived in the guilt of deliberate and habitual deeds of darkness, shall be punished “according to their works”—punished, not by the vengeance of a tyrant, but by the love of a Father—dealt with according to the requirements of each particular case—disciplined and chastised with all needful severity, in order that they may learn by bitter experience the utter folly and hoplessness of rebellion, and in order that, by any means, they may be brought back to the obedience of sons.

These opinions are at variance, I am well aware, with the traditional theology taught at this day in the great majority of Christian pulpits. But I believe them to be based upon the Word of God contained in Holy Writ, and to be consistent with the general tenor of the formularies of the Church of England. Ecclesiastical

history shows that, from the time of Origen to the present century, eminent and pious men, in different countries and at periods not very distant from each other, have arisen to protest against the theology which in the sixteenth century took its fixed form in Calvinism. That ecclesiastical corruption, like other forms of evil, should be permitted, may at first surprise ; but the intimations of Scripture, and the facts of history, prove to us that this is part of God's plan. The whole scheme of redemption is a scheme by which, in wonderful ways, God brings good out of evil. In due time we shall perceive and acknowledge the wisdom of all His methods, and the perfect harmony of all the results.

X.

The first work of the devil in connexion with the human race resulted in spiritual death to our first parents, and terrible consequences to their posterity. The meaning of the expression "the works of the devil" is very large. We are no more able to conceive its extent than to conceive infinity. Not that "the works of the devil" are infinite. He is but a finite creature ; and a creature cannot even imagine, much less do, anything infinite. But "the works of the devil" are so vast, if we take in their consequences, that they are as really beyond our comprehension as if they *were* infinite. Therefore, when we are told that Christ came on purpose to destroy them, from first to last, root and branch, the meaning is so immense, the height and depth and length and breadth of this Divine undertaking are so

immeasurably beyond the boundaries of our knowledge, or even the reach of our thought, that the prompt acknowledgment of every believing heart is adoring wonder and praise. We burst out with the psalmist into such language as this—"I will magnify Thee, O God my King, and I will praise Thy name for ever and ever. Every day will I give thanks unto Thee, and praise Thy name for ever and ever. The Lord is loving unto every man, and His mercy is over all His works. Let all flesh give thanks unto His holy name for ever and ever." These words of praise were written by a Jew, living under a narrow, dark, and temporary dispensation. Yet even He was enlightened by the Spirit of God to perceive that the Divine love and mercy were not restrained within the limits of Palestine, or confined to the chosen people. "Let *all flesh* give thanks unto His holy name;" not the seed of Jacob only, to whom His holy name has been specially interpreted and His divine will specially conveyed, but all the inhabitants of heathen lands, who know God only by His "true Light" shining in their consciences, and by the shadows of His greatness visible in His works. Nay, in another place he goes farther, and invites not human creatures only, but, in the language of high-strung poetry, "everything that hath breath," to "praise the Lord;" for the great Redemption includes, in a way which we cannot yet understand, "the whole creation," now groaning, but one day to be "delivered from the bondage of corruption."

A chief cause of the misinterpretation of St. Paul's theology is the prevalent notion that, when spiritual

benefits are spoken of by him, they must always be understood as belonging only to certain elect persons who were fore-ordained to salvation by the absolute decree of God, or as confined (others would say) to the faithful members of the Christian Church. And wherefore this limitation? Because the epistles are addressed to "the beloved of God, called to be saints;" "to them that are sanctified in Christ Jesus, called to be saints, with all that in every place call upon the name of Jesus Christ our Lord, both theirs and ours;" to "the faithful in Christ Jesus;" to "the saints and faithful brethren in Christ;" to "the Church in God the Father and the Lord Jesus Christ;" to his "own son in the faith," and to his "own son after the common faith."

Now it is true that none can *enjoy* the spiritual benefits of redemption until they begin to "call upon the name of Jesus Christ our Lord, both theirs and ours," and thus become "saints and faithful brethren in Christ." But no matter-of-fact can be more certain than this (and I consider it hopeless to argue with any who persist in denying it), that St. Paul speaks of the spiritual benefits of redemption as *earned by the Redeemer for the behoof of every human being*. On a former page I quoted Romans v. 18, which ought, of itself (though there are many similar passages), to set this question at rest for ever.

It has long been the fashion to praise in the most unqualified manner our authorized translation of the Bible. This ought to cease. The English of our version is in general excellent, but the rendering is very often extremely incorrect; and still oftener we find that

the impression left upon the mind by the translation is widely different from that which the original conveys. This is especially the case in the authorized version of the Epistles. The passage toward the end of the fifth chapter of Romans, already referred to, illustrates what I mean. "Who would not wish," says Bentley, "that our translators had kept the articles in the version, which they saw in the original? . . . Some hurtful mistakes about partial redemption, and absolute reprobation, had been happily prevented. Our English readers had then seen, what several of the Fathers saw and testified, that *the many*, in an antithesis to *the one*, are equivalent to *all*, in v. 12, and comprehended the whole multitude, the entire species of mankind, exclusive only of *the one*. So again, vv. 18, 19, our translators have repeated the like mistake."

The mischief arising from mistranslations is, moreover, greatly increased, when commentators venture to modify and alter the sense still farther, in order to support their own opinions. In the very page of Dr. Bloomfield's Greek Testament, from which I have copied the above quotation, Dr. Bloomfield says in his notes, "The meaning therefore of verses 18, 19 may be thus expressed (with Mr. Holden) '*As, by Adam's disobedience, all men are brought into a state of condemnation, so, by Christ's obedience, all men are brought into a state of justification and life; i.e. have the means of attaining that justification which will be crowned with eternal life.*'" This precious gloss by Mr. Holden, endorsed by Dr. Bloomfield, is worthy of attention. It presents the spectacle of two theologians, in attempting

to narrow one of the grandest revelations in the Bible to the dimensions of their system, making utter nonsense of the apostle's words. The free translation is good: the gloss is ridiculous.

Is it *true* that "all men have the means of attaining that justification which will be crowned with eternal life?" Look at India and China, thronged with millions upon millions in whose hearing the name of Christ never was pronounced, and never will be, in *this* life.

The perversion is made, if possible, more glaring by an admission of Dr. Bloomfield's in a previous note. He says "*Δικαιώσις ζωῆς* seems to mean such justification as should restore them to the salvation they had forfeited."

When the apostle asserts that "by Christ's obedience all men are brought into a state of justification and life" (meaning, of course, *spiritual* life), he is speaking of the race as a whole, including all generations from the beginning of the world, and all generations on to the end of the world: and he is speaking, not of a change which has already come to pass, historically, in the case of every individual of mankind (to suppose *that* would be absurd), but of what is in God's purpose concerning them. As Christ is "the Lamb slain from the foundation of the world," in God's purpose; so "all men are brought into a state of justification and life," in God's purpose. Historically the Lamb was not slain until the world had been inhabited by the human race for thousands of years: and, historically, all men cannot be "brought into a state of justification and life," until at least they have all come into existence. How much

longer it may be, before the latter purpose shall have become historical fact, it is impossible for us to discover. But it surely will not be questioned, that whatever is in God's purpose must become historical fact, in due time.

Accordingly, when St. Paul says (Eph. ii.), "God, who is rich in mercy, for His great love wherewith He loved us, even when we were dead in sins, hath quickened us together with Christ," he simply means that "what was in God's purpose concerning the whole race—concerning every individual of mankind without an exception—had already become historical fact with reference to the few Ephesians addressed in the Epistle.

It is necessary again to revert to what took place at the Fall in order to see what is implied in this quickening. From the moment of disobedience, Adam died in the sense threatened, *i.e.* became spiritually "dead in sins," and a child of wrath, or subject to wrath. His soul continued in his body, and all the faculties of his soul, originally created in God's image, continued to be part of his nature. But he no longer loved the Lord his God with all his heart and soul and strength and mind, nor his neighbour as himself. He had disobeyed and he now dreaded God; and he threw the blame of his sin upon his wife, the only human neighbour whom God had yet given him. Selfishness, the essence of sin, had taken the place of holy love. Now "God is love;" and the absence of that love, which is the Divine essence, implies spiritual death; and this death in sin implies condemnation and liability to Divine wrath. This spiritual *death*, then, was a complete contrast to the spiritual *life*, which Adam enjoyed before his fall. "To

be carnally-minded is death; to be spiritually-minded is life."

Redemption is not only deliverance from this spiritual death, and the wrath and punishment otherwise consequent upon it, but also restoration to spiritual life, and restoration to a higher spiritual life than that from which our first parents fell. "Where sin abounded grace did much more abound." Man is to become a partaker of the Divine nature through union with Christ. "Wrath, tribulation, and anguish," shall undoubtedly be "upon every soul of man that doeth evil" and continueth therein; and no delusion more irrational and more dangerous can take possession of one's mind than the idea that rebellion against God may be persisted in with impunity. But as soon as a sinner begins to submit his will to Christ's will, and to co-operate with the inward suggestions of the Holy Spirit, "the works of the devil" begin to be destroyed in that soul. No period is specified within which this must happen. The sooner it takes place the sooner the soul is saved. He who, in His own time, begins the good work, will not leave it undone or half done: and the good work must be begun some day. Does any one presume to doubt whether Christ *can* do, and *will* do, what He undertook to do?

It does not follow that, because in the purpose of God all have been redeemed and quickened by Christ, the historical succession of events, from our human point of view, is to be ignored. The work of atonement was completed when Christ said upon the cross, "It is finished," and "bowed His head and gave up the

ghost." The atonement, however, is not the whole work of redemption. On our Lord's ascension into heaven the work of intercession began, and that work continues to be carried on by Christ as our Redeemer. Soon after our Lord's ascension, the greater outpouring of the Spirit began; for Christ "received gifts for men, even for the rebellious;" and, as our Redeemer, He continues to bestow the graces of the Spirit, which are put at His disposal as the fruit of His atonement and intercession. At Pentecost, these gifts and graces were bestowed in an extraordinary manner, accompanied by signs and wonders. If it pleased the Lord to grant a pentecostal outpouring of the Spirit *now*, can there be a doubt as to the result? The hardest hearts would be melted, and the most stubborn wills perfectly subdued. But the times and the seasons are in God's power. He doeth what He will in the armies of heaven and among the inhabitants of the earth. Our time is always ready, but His time is not yet come. The efficacious graces of the Spirit are His, to grant or to withhold. By His providence He is ever virtually saying to us, "Is it not lawful for me to do what I will with mine own?"

Yet we, too, are His own. "We are His offspring." We are his own by creation and by redemption, and He will never do with His own redeemed creatures anything unworthy of His character. But he has placed us in a moral system, which is gradually developing under certain laws. These laws, indeed, are merely expressions of His will, which He may vary; but in general they act uniformly. One of them is, that *who-*

ever makes the best use he can of the light he has shall receive more. This principle is taught by Christ in the parable of the talents. Another law is, that "to whom much is given, of them shall the more be required:" in other words, responsibility is in proportion to opportunity. Our reason is satisfied that nothing can be more just than these two principles. Can we conceive any two general rules more entirely in accordance with the strictest justice?

It is the uniform working of these two general rules, which every thinker must admit to be perfectly just, that accounts for the low state of religion, or the utter absence of it, among persons brought up as Christians. It is because they are not acting up to the light they have, and because they do not live in the real belief that much shall be required of them to whom much is given—it is owing to this, and to nothing but this, that they are not *all* as sincere disciples of the Lord Jesus as were the apostles and evangelists who wrote the Books of the New Testament.

There is a "true Light" shining in "every man." The candle of the Lord is in every soul of the redeemed race of Adam. If we use that light, cherish that light, walk in that light, which is reflected in every sentence of Divine revelation, the blessed heavenly light will gradually fill every corner of our being. What is this but being spiritually quickened? "The light is the *life* of men." To have that light shining in every chamber of the soul, welcomed, loved, worshipped there, is to have Christ the Lord dwelling in us by His Spirit, and nourishing us from the infinite fulness of His own

Divine life, in proportion to our ever-increasing capacity to receive.

Instead, therefore, of limiting the Holy One of Israel, and attempting to fit in His infinite designs to the grooves of our logic, and making ecclesiastical mosaics out of texts of Scripture, often unconnected, and as often misinterpreted, and then marching proudly along these tessellated pavements to conclusions at which the angels in heaven would stand aghast; instead of deceiving ourselves and others with such presumptuous folly as this, both clergy and laity ought to address all their energies to realizing, as far as possible, the great but simple truths which find a Divine echo in every honest and good heart, and which tend to develop within us love to God and man, the sum and substance of true and undefiled religion.

XI.

The prophecy of Joel, quoted by St. Peter in his addresses to those who witnessed the miraculous gift of tongues, demands our attention with reference to the subject before us. "This is that," said the apostle, "which was spoken by the prophet Joel: And it shall come to pass in the last days, saith God, I will pour out my Spirit upon all flesh." How is this to be understood?

Bengel says, "All the days of the New Testament are last days; and these last days are now advanced far forward." "The promise does not appertain to that Pentecost alone;" in proof of which the commentator refers to v. 39, "The promise is unto you and to your

children, and to all that are afar off, even as many as the Lord our God shall call." Under that verse he says, "In this passage the Holy Spirit spake through Peter such things as to the *admission of the Gentiles* speedily, in a large number, and without circumcision, as Peter himself (during his trance at Joppa) did not at once perceive."

This explanation is not satisfactory. The Jewish and Gentile converts to Christianity cannot mean "all flesh."

Townsend says, St. Peter "now declares the prophecy of Joel (just quoted) to have been fully accomplished on this occasion." "The prophecy of Joel was not applied to the great effusion of the Holy Spirit, by St. Peter only: the traditions of the Jews record its reference to the same event in the days of the Messiah." He then quotes from a Jewish commentary the following words: "When Moses placed his hand upon Joshua, the Holy and blessed God said, In the days of the Old Testament, one prophesies at one time, but in the days of the Messiah, all the house of Israel shall prophecy, as is said in Joel ii. 48." Townsend adds, "The people assembled therefore at the festival of Pentecost, who were acquainted with this prediction, and its traditional interpretation, were now the spectators of its actual fulfilment."

This is very startling. Can any one believe that the few Jews, on whom the Holy Spirit descended miraculously on the day of Pentecost, are equivalent to "all flesh?" Did all the house of Israel prophesy? We never heard of this. But even if they had all prophesied—if all the descendants then alive of the twelve

patriarchs had been equally with the apostles the subjects of the miracle of Pentecost, would the prediction of Joel concerning "all flesh" have thus been fulfilled?

Dr. Bloomfield says, "*All flesh* seems to mean *some* of all orders and ranks, and (in a secondary sense) of all nations."

Why does "all flesh" seem to mean only *some*? Why may not "all flesh" mean "all flesh," or all mankind, as Joel predicted? Did the commentator perceive that the prophecy was a live shell amid the wood, hay, and stubble of his theology?

One aspect of this traditional theology has, during the last few years, occupied the earnest attention of a great number of earnest inquirers, educated in different systems, in different countries, and in the midst of the most dissimilar circumstances. I refer to the subject of this pamphlet—the *final destiny of the human race*.

The same thing may be observed, to a surprising extent, even in matters of science. Again and again, within the last few years, the discovery of an unknown fact, or an unknown law, has been made in different parts of the world by persons who never heard of one another. Their minds have been led into similar trains of thought and reasoning, and they have arrived at the same conclusion. This has happened in the case of several astronomical discoveries, in the case of the electric telegraph, and in the case of thermo-dynamics, the new science of heat. There can be no difficulty in producing a large number of such instances. And who that has kept up even a superficial acquaintance with the *theology* of the day, has not been struck by the

extraordinary coincidence of the thought between works published about the same time in different countries, and often by persons quite unknown to each other as co-workers in the same field. This has ever been the case in transition states of society and of opinion. God has led the thoughts of many men into similar channels at the same time. He is educating the race, and this is one of His methods. And never, perhaps, has His providence been more clearly manifested than in the history of thought, including all kinds of discovery and invention, in the century in which our lot has been cast.

The progress of Divine knowledge in the world has been gradual and slow ; but there *has* been a progress. Yet, like the progress of the earth around the sun, it has been accompanied by successive alternations of day and night. "Behold the darkness shall cover the earth, and gross darkness the people : but the Lord shall arise upon thee, and his glory shall be seen upon thee."

Man has existed upon the earth but a very short time : the period is but as a handbreadth between two eternities, the past and future.

Down to this date, therefore, there has not been time for *many* alternations of spiritual night and day upon society and the church of God. There was a time when this globe of earth had made only a few revolutions upon its axis, on its first journey round the sun. The church is at this hour in a position somewhat analogous. It has little more than commenced its journey, set out upon its orbit around the central Sun of the universe, Jesus Christ, by whom God made the worlds. There has been time for only a few alterna-

tions of darkness and light. The last great sunrise upon the church was the first coming of the Messiah. The next great sunrise will be His second coming. After the earlier centuries of the Christian era, the darkness continued to approach visibly and steadily. At length it became gross darkness. But the darkest hour at night is that which precedes the dawn. In the sixteenth century the shadows began to be broken by streaks of light. But the reformers did not turn their backs on midnight, to find themselves suddenly in mid-day. They gave up the infallibility of the Pope and of the Roman Church, but they did not discover that the only infallible authority that ever appeared upon earth is the Lord Jesus Christ. They looked upon inspiration and infallibility as the same thing, whereas they are really distinct. All the prophets, and apostles, and other eminent servants of the Most High, have been erring and fallible creatures, of like passions with ourselves. St. Paul and St. Peter were inspired men, filled with the Holy Ghost and with wisdom, according to their measure. But they differed widely in opinion on ecclesiastical subjects. To assert the infallible truth of everything they taught and wrote, is therefore to take up a position which cannot be maintained: it is to ascribe to them what they never claimed, and what in reality belongs only to God.

Forty years ago Goldsmith's "History of Rome" was a standard school-book throughout the British Empire. Competent critics found, however, upon inquiry, that the early part of it was not history at all, but poetry or fable; and now one would be thought either ignorant or

unreasonable who held any other view, so clearly has the matter been established. Yet the separation of the poetry from the literal history, and the elimination of the mistakes from the history itself, have not diminished in our esteem the vast importance of what the great Roman empire did for the civilization of Europe. Far from it. The whole subject, on the contrary, stands out now with greater clearness and in bolder relief than ever.

In like manner, we were taught to regard as *literal* history the account given in Genesis of the Creation and Fall. Can we now teach our children that the world was created in six literal days; that the serpent did not begin to creep upon its belly till Adam ate the forbidden fruit; and that serpents eat dust? Can we teach them that the Book of Genesis was dictated or revealed by God to Moses, or that the Pentateuch, as a whole, was penned by Moses? No. If we care for truth, we cannot. Fifteen years ago, I, who now write thus, published a pamphlet endeavouring to uphold the literal view of the first chapters of Genesis. I have been driven from that ground, step by step, against my will, until I now see as clearly as I see the light of day, that such a position must be for ever abandoned, if one prefers truth to prejudice and party. But, do I value the gospel of Christ less because I have changed my opinion as to the right way of looking at Genesis? No. The longer I live, and the more I think, read, and learn of God's works and ways, the more I prize the blessed gospel of our infallible Saviour, as the only hope of the world, of society, and of the individual; and as the one sure anchor of my own soul.

From early childhood I was taught to believe in Endless Torments as the inevitable doom of the non-elect. I know now that this dogma is not found in the Bible, but only in mistranslations and misrepresentations of it. Do I, therefore, value the gospel less? Bless the Lord, O my soul! I value it every day the more. Since I awoke from that hideous dream of my youth, and shook off that accursed nightmare which cannot survive the approach of day, the world has seemed to me like another world, and the universe to be filled with a Divine light and beauty unknown to me before.

Ah, yes. At last the day is really breaking, the shadows are fleeing in black cohorts, the darkness of ages no longer conceals the idolatries of baptized superstition. It is a glorious sight from the top of the Rhigi, or any of the Bernese or Italian Alps, to see the sun rise. Peak after peak, lately in darkness, starts into clear outline against the sky. Then the points are tipped with gold, as if by enchantment. Gradually a glow of crimson comes stealing over the mountain-world, making the very snow look warm. The Church is crying, "Watchman! what of the night?" crying up from the valleys far down, still buried in shadow and gloom. The answer is, "Arise! shine! for thy light is come," although thou seest it not. Bestir thyself! come up hither out of the darkness, into this marvellous light on the hill-tops, and see what *may* be seen—the mountains covered with the glory of the coming King. Continue no longer to sleep in indolence and apathy when we bring thee such tidings. "Arise! shine!" Come up hither and see, and according to thy

measure reflect, the rising glory—the spreading light. No believer in God and in Christ needs fear the light.

But there are many, many, many, down among the lingering shades, who will answer the watchman with divers excuses for *not* arising. No, no, say they, we will cling to the darkness as long as we can. We do not wish to be disturbed. It will be time enough to rise when the light comes bursting in through our windows, making it impossible to sleep any longer. If *you* like to climb the hills to watch the advancing morn, do so. Let *us* alone. We have no enthusiasm on the subject. We and our children are in bed. We will close the shutters and draw the curtains, and sleep as long as we can.

So it was at the earlier dawn of the Reformation. “Deny the infallibility of Holy Church and our holy Father the Pope!” exclaimed millions of tolerably honest men and women far down in the darkness. “God forbid! We want no such new light as that.”

When little children read allegories and parables and fables, they never think at first of doubting their historical truth. They have no difficulty, for instance, in conceiving birds and beasts holding animated conversations in good English. But as they grow older, they begin to distinguish the *literal* sense from the *lesson* which the outward form is intended to convey.

The world was created by the power of God: and man, created in the image of God, fell from his first estate. These are great truths. They are as really truths when taught under the form of poetry, or parable, or allegory, as if they had been stated literally. We

have some reason to believe that, stated literally, the truth with regard to creation at least would have been unintelligible. The Bible, and especially the Old Testament, recognizes the weakness of our mental faculties when in contact with spiritual subjects, and helps us by pictures, as we help school-children.

The great pentecostal doctrine of the outpouring of the Divine Spirit upon "all flesh" is taught with the utmost possible plainness, without parable, or allegory, or anything of the kind. Although one of the leading truths of Christianity, it is only now beginning to be understood. No one can maintain that the explanations quoted from Bengel, Townsend, and Bloomfield, are anything but evasions or perversions of a very distinct prophecy.

The sun being turned into darkness and the moon into blood, and similar forms of expression, are evidently figurative. "The last days" represent at least the period from the first to the second advent. In the next chapter, St. Peter says, in another sermon: God "shall send Jesus Christ, which before was preached unto you; whom the Heaven must receive until the times of *restitution of all things*, which God hath spoken by the mouth of all His holy prophets since the world began."

This "restitution of all things" is the hope of the world. "Good will toward men," announced by "a multitude of the heavenly host" at the birth of Jesus, is explained by Bengel as "the newly-manifested pleasure of God towards the whole human race, in His Well-beloved." St. Paul says that, by the law, God had "concluded all [both Jews and Gentiles] under sin,

that he might have mercy upon all." "This great hope of humanity," says the Dean of Westminster, "the expectation of the ultimate union and brotherhood of all mankind, whether living or dead, to be governed by a perfect Ruler, the Son of God, and to live under conditions as favorable to moral elevation as to physical well-being—dates from the Fall itself." "It is from first to last THE GOSPEL, and nothing else."*

It is abundantly clear, from Holy Writ, that the dispensation, or æon, under which we are now living is preliminary to a greater dispensation yet to come, in which it will be seen what God intended by such words as these: "I will pour out my spirit upon all flesh." "All flesh shall see the salvation of God." "By fire will the Lord plead with all flesh." "All flesh shall come to worship before me, saith the Lord"—"the God of the spirits of all flesh." "All Israel shall be saved." Christ "the Saviour of all men especially [*not exclusively*] of them that believe."

Salvation is of many degrees, if the Scriptures are to be taken as authority in the argument, rather than schemes of inferences strung together by theologians. Some are saved with a great salvation, others "so as by fire." Some have an entrance "ministered unto them abundantly into the everlasting kingdom," as "kings and priests unto God," "vessels unto honour;" others as "vessels unto dishonour" (which means merely for less honorable service, but still for service). Some are to be rulers and teachers; others are to be governed and

* The Bible : its Form and Substance.

taught.* But, upon *all*, the Divine Spirit will ultimately be poured.

XII.

History, experience, conscience, and Scripture teach, as with one voice, that "the wicked shall not be unpunished." The punishment of wickedness is not wholly deferred. Misery follows close in its track. The inward consciousness of wrong-doing is a wretched feeling, and it is usually accompanied by the dread of retribution beyond the present life. What is this but the voice of God in the soul, warning the transgressor? A man must shut his eyes to the providence of God, and turn a deaf ear to conscience and revelation, if he fancies for a moment that his sin will not find him out; that transgression will not be followed by suffering; that the Divine laws can be violated with impunity; that God will allow any one to go on in sin, without making him feel bitterly in the long run the utter folly of such rebellion. As reasonably might a man oppose his neck to the progress of a railway train in full career, and hope to avoid being crushed, as oppose his will to the eternal law of God and dream of escaping the tremendous consequences. There is no gospel for a sinner, so long as he continues by choice to persevere in sin. He is against God, and God is against Him; and truly it must be a fearful thing for one who maintains this attitude of rebellion to fall into the hands of the living God.

* See on this subject "The Destiny of the Human Race."

Any opinions, therefore, which make sinners think lightly of sin, are contrary to truth, are without real authority, are unspeakably dangerous and ruinous.

But, on the other hand, if we are set apart to preach the "good tidings" of Jesus Christ, and to set forth what has been revealed concerning the character of God and His purposes toward His creatures, it is our duty to withhold nothing of what we are able to discover in the revelation. To keep back a part of the truth, is to mutilate and distort the truth. It is to give a false impression of the revelation, and a false impression of the character of God. If the motive be the notion that souls will be safer by being kept in ignorance of some truths, this is not only doing evil that good may follow, and acting in the spirit of the dark system which for ages concealed the Bible from the laity, but it is indirectly affecting to be wiser than God. As if God had revealed more than could safely be taught! As if parts of a revelation could have a tendency to lead to reckless and unclean living! As if the disciples knew better than their Lord and Master what instrumentality is best fitted to convince and convert the erring! Is this faith in God? Or is it a preference of the little expedients of human policy, ignorant, impotent, and short-sighted, to the infinite wisdom of the Divine Governor of the universe? I leave the question to be answered.

But this is not all. There is not only reason to complain that part of the truth is kept back, sometimes through ignorance and prejudice, sometimes from motives of ecclesiastical policy; but there is reason still more loudly to complain that man's inventions are added

to the revelation; and this to the perversion from their original meaning, not merely of single words and sentences of Scripture, but of whole passages, containing long trains of argument.

God will enter into no compromise with sin. It is disease. Wherever it exists, there must be more or less suffering till the disease is cured. Yet suffering will not cure it, any more than suffering will cure cancer or leprosy. Suffering is the consequence, but never can be the cure; although it may be a necessary condition without which the cure cannot be effected. Purgatorial flames, by which sin may be literally burnt out, are a vain imagination of the Roman Church. All the fire in the universe cannot erase one stain of guilt; but "the blood of Jesus Christ cleanseth from all sin;" and we have yet to learn where the Scriptures affirm or hint *that its efficacy for this purpose will cease after a certain date*. In this world or the next, in time or eternity, sin can be cured by no other remedy. The Popish purgatory, in which so much literal burning is an expiation or equivalent for so much guilt, and thus a means of cancelling it, is a monkish fiction, dishonoring to the finished work of Christ, and contradictory to the whole tenor of the Gospel.

It is not possible to give any clear account of what the Bible really teaches with regard to the condition of the wicked in a future state, without referring to Hebrew and Greek words, which are carefully distinguished in the original Scriptures, but which have been constantly translated *Hell* in our English Bible. The confusion thus caused has led to many mistakes and delusions.

The Hebrew word שְׁאוֹל *sheōl*, and the Greek word ᾍδης *hades*, mean *the state of the dead*, good and bad, or *the grave*. They mean this, and nothing more. But both words are in our translation rendered by the word *Hell*, which, in popular language, is now generally understood to mean the place “prepared for the devil and his angels,” or “the lake of fire and brimstone,” mentioned in the Apocalypse.

In the whole Old Testament, from the first verse of Genesis to the last of Malachi, there is not a single clear statement with reference to the final condition of the impenitent in a future life, nor even any clear revelation of a future judgment. On this point, contradiction is challenged.

In the New Testament, the word *Hades* has the same meaning as the word *Sheōl* in the Old. It means simply *the grave*, or *the state of the dead*, including the righteous as well as the wicked. I cite a few passages to show how the rendering of this word by *Hell*, in our English version, conveys a wrong sense to the general reader.

“Thou Capernaum which art exalted unto heaven shall be brought down to hell.”—“The gates of hell shall not prevail against it” (*i.e.* against the Church of Christ).—“In hell he (the rich man) lift up his eyes.”—“Thou wilt not leave my soul in hell.”—“His soul was not left in hell.”—“I am alive for evermore, and have the keys of hell.”—“Death and hell delivered up the dead which were in them.”

In all these instances the word *Hell* is given as the equivalent of the Greek word *Hades*, which means *the grave*, or *the state of the dead*, and nothing more.

The Greek word Γέεννα, *Gehenna*, also translated *Hell*, now demands attention. *Gehenna* is "the valley of Hinnom," a valley on the south-east of Jerusalem, where children had been made to pass through the fire to the idol Moloch, or Baal. It was also called *Tophet*, from the word *tuph*, a drum, because drums were used to drown the cries of the children, who were there placed on the red-hot hands of the idol, and sacrificed in the flames. On account of the abominable cruelties which had been practised in *Gehenna*, or *Tophet*, during the prevalence of this idolatry, king Josiah had the place polluted, so that it could not again be used for any purposes of worship; and it became a receptacle for the offal of slain beasts, for dead dogs, and all sorts of carrion, as well as for the bodies of the worst class of criminals, which were there exposed. All this animal matter, accumulating daily in the immediate vicinity of a populous city, and infecting the atmosphere, would have been dangerous to the inhabitants had it not been consumed, for the disgusting heaps putrefied and bred worms continually. Great fires, we are told, were therefore kept burning day and night in the valley; and into these fires the carcasses were thrown. The place was, therefore, a fit emblem of all that is loathsome and horrible; and the punishment awarded by the highest Jewish tribunal for the most atrocious crimes was death, followed by the ignominy of being cast, when dead, into the fires of the valley of Hinnom,—the fires of *Gehenna*, where the worms bred by corruption, inasmuch as some were always to be seen, might be said, by a bold figure, never to die.

It is to this place that our Lord refers, either directly or by analogy, in His sermon on the mount.

There were among the Jews different tribunals, at which crimes of different degrees were investigated and pronounced upon. Our Saviour, pointing out the greater spirituality of the law in His kingdom, observes: "Ye have heard that it was said by [to] them of old time, Thou shalt not kill; and whosoever shall kill shall be in danger of the Judgment. But *I* say unto you, that whosoever is angry with his brother without a cause, shall be in danger of [amenable to] the Judgment: and whosoever shall say to his brother, Raca [a term of contempt] shall be in danger of the council [the great national sanhedrim of seventy-two judges]: but whosoever shall say, Thou fool [apostate, or rebel], shall be in danger of the fiery Gehenna." Whether our Saviour, in this passage, is simply declaring, by an illustration perfectly familiar to His hearers, the higher spirituality of the law of love which He proclaimed as a development of the Mosaic code; or whether He intends further to intimate, what He elsewhere teaches under the figure of "many stripes" and "few stripes," that there will be degrees of punishment in a future life corresponding to degrees of guilt in the present, it is not easy positively to determine. The Jews of our Saviour's time are said to have used the word Gehenna as equivalent to Tartarus, which in the *Iliad* is represented as a place beneath the earth, as far below Hades as heaven is above the earth, and which later poets describe as the place in which the spirits of wicked men are punished for their crimes. However

this may be, it is clear that to base any precise doctrine with regard to the nature and duration of future punishment on a figurative or illustrative reference to the burning of carcases in the valley of Hinnom is to press the language of the Divine sermon beyond what it will bear. Of course to the English reader, the expression "hell-fire" conveys but one meaning; and, as soon as the passage is referred to, the popular doctrine seems to be proved. But such proof of such a doctrine cannot be allowed.

The same remark applies to the following passages: "If thy right eye offend thee (or cause thee to offend) pluck it out, and cast it from thee [no one will say that this is to be understood in any but a highly figurative sense]: for it is profitable for thee that one of thy members should perish, and not that thy whole body should be cast into the valley of Hinnom." The same statement follows, with reference to the "right hand," and the same reason is urged. These are parables. Words of like import are afterwards recorded by St. Matthew (ch. xviii.) as uttered by our Lord, with this important difference, that "the Gehenna of fire" and the "*æonian* fire" are so used as to imply that the punishments of a future state are the subject. And St. Mark, in the parallel passage, adds three times these words, which appear to be quoted from the last verse of Isaiah: "Where their worm dieth not, and the fire is not quenched." The prophet speaks of dead bodies: "They shall go forth, and look upon the carcases of the men that have transgressed against me; for their worm shall not die, neither shall their fire be

quenched; and they shall be an abhorring unto all flesh.”*

I desire to refer with the utmost reverence and caution to words which evangelists represent as spoken by the Son of God; and I should tremble at the thought of narrowing their sense, or accommodating them to unauthorized opinions. But nothing can be more certain than this, that when the future consequences of unrepented sin are represented by the burning of dead bodies, in which worms are moving, the words cannot be taken in any but a figurative sense. And, even following the analogy which they suggest, it is plain that neither the worms nor the fire tortured the bodies of the malefactors; for they were dead. They were degraded and consumed but not tortured. The worms themselves alone suffered. If the analogy be followed out, the conclusion may seem to favor those who have supposed the *annihilation* of the obstinately impenitent; never the idea of immortality in torture. But I cannot believe that a soul redeemed by Christ—a soul for which Christ died—a soul which the effectual grace of the Holy Ghost certainly *can* convert and sanctify, will ever be annihilated. Every soul is the breath of God (Gen. ii. 7), and has immortality stamped upon it. Figurative language must not be stretched beyond proper limits. The fires of Gehenna, on the south-east of Jerusalem, however long they may have burned, were extinguished ages ago. The traveller walks through the valley, and finds no trace of the horrors which were there enacted. The brook still flows

* See Art. *Hell*, in Dr. Smith's "Dictionary of the Bible."

through it into the Kedron. The cliffs of Zion, on the north, still face the rocky tombs on the south. But there is no longer anything to mark it as the accursed place which once it was—a proverb for ignominy, and a type of Hell.

If any man will “go on in sin that grace may abound;” if any man fancies, and continues to act upon the delusion, that God is too merciful to chastise obstinate rebellion, defiant wickedness, he shall be made to feel the magnitude of his mistake and the inevitable penalties of inexorable law. But, on the other hand, if any one entertains a theory which leads to the conclusion that the Divine scheme of the universe is imperfect; that the redemption of mankind is a mere theological phrase; that God requires *us* to love those whom He Himself does not love; that the Divine wrath will outlive the Divine mercy, which “endureth for ever;” and that few, out of the unnumbered millions who have lived upon the earth, will ever have any reason to rejoice that “the Lord reigneth;”—*that* theorist alters the everlasting Gospel to meet the requirements of a sect, proclaims the creation of mankind by God (with full knowledge of results) to be an act of omnipotent malice, and asks us to believe what the promises on the Sacred Page declare to be false, what God’s voice in the human bosom affirms to be impossible.

Let us fall into the hands of God, for His mercies are great; and let us not fall into the hands of man! How can we ignore the interests of the generations that are gone? They were our brethren by creation and redemption. They *are* our brethren *now*, by the same

ties, wherever they may be. There is none righteous. If God were strict to mark iniquity, who should stand? But His grace is almighty, as His holiness is perfect; and when He commands *us* to love our brethren of mankind as we love ourselves, He bids us imitate His own love, which is infinite, embracing all for whom Christ died, seeking, and in due time finding, the last of all the wanderers, the most degraded and the most miserable of all them that were lost.

XIII.

Those who believe in the doctrine of Endless Torments generally consider it to be proved by the parable of the Rich Man and Lazarus. It can easily be shown that the parable proves nothing of the kind.

Selfishness is the root of sin, and the very opposite of that love to our neighbour which proceeds from love to God. Among the Jews, the phrase "Moses and the Prophets" meant the Old Testament Scriptures. In those Scriptures, the love of God and our neighbour is plainly taught. In Deut. vi. 5, we read, "Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thine heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy might." This is repeated over and over in the same book. In Lev. xix. 18, we read, "Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself: I am the Lord."

But what was the character of the Pharisees, to whom the parable of the Rich Man and Lazarus, and others preceding it, were directly addressed? Our Lord said, "Woe unto you Scribes and Pharisees,

hypocrites ! for ye devour widows' houses, and for a pretence make long prayers ;" "Ye make clean the outside of the cup and the platter ; but within are full of extortion and excess." Extortion and excess implied covetousness and sensuality ; and, after the parable of the Unjust Steward, concluding with the lesson, "Ye cannot serve God and mammon," these words occur :—
"The Pharisees also who were covetous, heard all these things, and they derided Him." Our Lord answered their derision with a rebuke which must have been terrible in their ears, and then uttered the parable of the Rich Man and Lazarus.

The Pharisees held that the traditions of the fathers came from God, and were of at least equal authority with the Old Testament Scriptures ; and thus, in some instances, they "made the commandment of God of none effect by their traditions." They said that "when Moses waited upon God forty days in the mount, he received from Him a double law ; one in writing, the other traditionary, containing the sense and explication of the former ; that Moses, being come to his tent, repeated it first to Aaron, then to Ithamar and Eleazar, his sons, then to the seventy elders, and lastly to all the people. The rabbis also inform us, that Moses at his death repeated the oral law again to Joshua, that he delivered it to the elders, they to the prophets, and the prophets to the wise men of the great synagogue :"* and so it was handed down from generation to generation. This oral law, or interpretation of the original law, was written down in a book called the *Mishna*,

* Jennings' "Jewish Antiquities."

about a century and a half after the birth of Christ. In the traditions thus handed down originated some of the principal errors of the Pharisees, as to doctrine and practice ; just as some false doctrines and superstitions of our own day have come down to us through a succession of traditional commentators.

The direct purpose of the parable of the Rich Man and Lazarus was to expose the folly and wickedness of the Pharisees, in so explaining away the law of God as to justify themselves in the grossest selfishness. Pretending to be uncommonly devout, and making their boast in the law, the very essence of which was the love of God and man, they were hypocrites, living in self-indulgence, and neglecting the poor. Proud of being descended from Abraham, they despised and often oppressed their poorer brethren, who were equally his children. By representing the rich man and the poor man as they appeared before death, and after it, our Lord vividly taught the certainty of retribution in another life, and the sufficiency of the Old Testament Scriptures to make a person fully aware of the nature of the Divine law and the penalties of wilful disobedience.

The Sadducees held "that there is no resurrection, neither angel, nor spirit." But the Pharisees believed that the spirits of the dead were all conveyed to Hades—that, after passing the gate, happy souls were carried by good angels to one part of Hades, and miserable souls by wicked angels to another—and that there, within sight of each other, but separated by an impassable chasm, the righteous and the wicked awaited

the resurrection. The region of Hades occupied by the righteous appears to be that which is called by our Saviour *Paradise*, when He said to the penitent thief, "To-day shalt thou be with me in Paradise." When we repeat in the creed the words, "He descended into hell," we mean that He descended into Hades. When we read (1 Pet. iii. 19) that "He went and preached unto the spirits in prison, which sometime were disobedient, when once the longsuffering of God waited in the days of Noah," we cannot understand this to mean anything but that, after His crucifixion, He preached the gospel to the souls of those who perished in the Deluge, dying in unbelief. Does not this seem to teach, that, although the gulf or chasm separating the souls of the righteous from the souls of the wicked is normally impassable between death and the resurrection, there have been exceptions? For, if our Lord's preaching to the spirits in prison was not altogether ineffectual, which it is hard to believe, then those who accepted mercy through the offered Gospel must have been delivered from that part of Hades which is called the "prison," and allowed to pass across the chasm into Paradise where the souls of the blessed rest in hope (Acts ii. 26).

The force of the parable is greatly increased by the way in which the rich man is represented. It does not say that he oppressed the poor, or that he drove Lazarus from his gate, or that he refused to allow the crumbs to be given to him. He is merely spoken of as "a rich man which was clothed in purple and fine linen, and fared sumptuously every day." But it leaves us to

infer that nothing better could be said of him—that he was living to himself, for his own animal enjoyment, and quite indifferent to the condition of the sufferer at his gate. The Divine law said distinctly, “Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself.” Lazarus was his “neighbour” in the strictest sense, was one of “the children of his people.” How the rich man might justify this neglect to his conscience, we do not know. We are considering a parable, be it remembered. But very likely there was some tradition of the elders, which in a case of this sort might make the commandment of God of none effect. Was there some peculiar interpretation of the word “neighbour?” Christ had just said to the Pharisees, “Ye are they which justify yourselves before men : but God knoweth your hearts ; for that which is highly esteemed among men is abomination in the sight of God.” He then proceeded to show that the moral law is immutable—that “it is easier for heaven and earth to pass, than for one tittle of the law to fail.” Now the rich man, by neglecting Lazarus, while indulging himself, deliberately broke the law ; and, although there was an interval, after the death of Lazarus, before the rich man himself was summoned, he did not repent, but died in his sins. His body was buried, and his soul followed that of Lazarus to Hades, though there was to be a great difference in their condition there, and a “great gulf” between them.

“And in Hades he (the rich man) lift up his eyes, being in torments, and seeth Abraham afar off, and Lazarus in his bosom. And he cried and said, father

Abraham, have mercy on me [no prayer to God whose law he had broken, but only to father Abraham] and send Lazarus, that he may dip the tip of his finger in water, and cool my tongue ; for I am tormented in this flame." The language is awfully strong, and expresses intense suffering. At the same time, when examining the parable to ascertain definite doctrine, we must not forget that this is an ideal representation, which cannot be taken literally. The bodies of Abraham, Lazarus, and the rich man were all left upon earth. *They* were disembodied spirits. The words tongue, finger, water, flame, are of course used figuratively.

"But Abraham said, Son [he does not disclaim the relationship], remember that thou in thy lifetime receivedst thy good things, and likewise Lazarus evil things: but now he is comforted, and thou art tormented." The retribution is just. Thou didst break the law which he endeavoured to keep. Lazarus must have been a *faithful* son of Abraham ; otherwise he could not be pictured as "carried by the angels into Abraham's bosom." Then Abraham points out the impossibility at present of any passing to and fro of the spirits in prison to the spirits in Paradise, or of the spirits in Paradise to the spirits in prison.

It is important to observe that here the state between death and the resurrection alone is represented. There is no reference whatever to the period after the resurrection, or to the nature and duration of suffering in that subsequent dispensation. Any inference on *that* subject, based upon this parable, must be entirely unwarranted. Yet such inferences *have* been drawn from

it, and formed into an article of faith. If the parable of the Unjust Steward were interpreted on the principles which some commentators have applied to the parable of the Rich Man and Lazarus, what would the consequence be?

The *connexion* of the parables in the fifteenth and sixteenth chapters of St. Luke ought not to pass unnoticed.

The man who had a hundred sheep is represented as seeking that which is lost "*until he find it.*"

The woman who had ten pieces of silver is represented as seeking "*diligently*" for the lost piece "*till she find it.*"

The Father rejoices over the prodigal, because "he was lost *and is found*;" and that parable shows no less clearly than the others that the Father would not have been satisfied till the lost son *was* found.

Then follow two parables showing the responsibility which accompanies the command of money, and the duty of using a suitable proportion of what belongs to us for the benefit of our neighbour who needs our help. The first three parables exhibit God's love to his lost ones; the other two, our obligation to imitate His love to *us*, by loving one another, and thus proving our gratitude for His benefits as well as our faith in His promises.

The connexion and order of these parables is very significant; and no person who clearly perceives this, will be disposed to put a forced construction upon the last of the series, in order to extort from it a doctrine inconsistent with that which is revealed in at least three of the four preceding parables.

For who is this rich man? Is he not one of "the lost sheep of the house of Israel?" And is not the Owner seeking him "until He find him?" Is not this rich man a lost silver-piece, with traces of God's image still discernible upon the coin? And is not the Owner seeking it "until He find it?" Is not this rich man one of God's prodigal sons? He has wasted his opportunities and advantages, and they have been taken away from him. He is not merely in "a far country," and "in want," but shut up in prison and suffering intense anguish. Yet is he not still in his Father's dominions, and within his Father's reach? Is not his Father's eye still upon him? Is he not still a son, though a prisoner? And is not man's necessity God's opportunity? Is His arm shortened that it *cannot* save? Is His ear heavy that it cannot hear? Is infinite love exhausted? Is infinite mercy no more? How long does God's mercy endure? "His mercy endureth for ever." How long does the Gospel last? It is called "the everlasting Gospel," which surely does not mean less than that it lasts as long as it can be needed. Everywhere God is present. Everywhere "God is love." Does any one venture to say that "God is love" in one place but not in another?

The rich man sinned by living in selfishness. He was rich, and did not help his poor neighbour who lay suffering at his gate. This proved that his heart was not right in the sight of God. He did not realize the danger of disobeying the Divine law. But as soon as he passed into the state of the dead, the folly of his life of self-indulgence burst upon his soul at once. There

could be no doubt *now* of the reality of retribution. "God is love;" but for purposes of love "God is a consuming fire;" consuming the dross, that the gold on which His image was stamped may be purified and made fit to receive the impression of His image again. Do we not already see a change for the better in the rich man, even during the short time referred to in the parable? Now that his eyes are open to the danger of delaying repentance and amendment, he begins to show a concern for others. He does not act exclusively on selfish principles. When he sees the hopelessness of his own condition for the present, he says to Abraham, "I pray thee, therefore, Father, that thou wouldest send him (Lazarus) to my father's house: For I have five brethren, that he may testify unto *them*, lest they also come into this place of torment." He not only makes this brotherly request, but he is importunate, and urges it very earnestly even when repelled. Abraham said, "They have Moses and the prophets; let them hear *them*. And he said, Nay, father Abraham, but, if one went unto them from the dead, they will repent. And he said unto him, If they hear not Moses and the prophets, neither will they be persuaded though one rose from the dead."

Our Lord afterwards did actually raise from the dead a real person of the name of Lazarus; yet many who witnessed the miracle were not persuaded to live unto God.

I think that the parable of the Rich Man and Lazarus may be not merely a parable, but also to some extent a figurative statement of actual facts. Figura-

tive it must be ; for we could not otherwise understand what relates entirely to the unseen world. But it is worthy of remark that our Lord adopts the scenery, if I may so speak, of what is said to have been the current Jewish idea of Hades. However inadequate that idea may have been, had it contradicted the essential characteristics of the reality, we cannot suppose that our Lord would have used it even as an illustration.

XIV.

Love, like light, permeates the universe. "God is love." "God is light." The objects of God's love may cast shadows, in a moral sense ; as the objects on which light falls cast shadows, in a physical sense. "God is light, and in Him is no darkness at all ;" but it is when His creatures are conscious of mental and spiritual darkness in themselves, that they are ready to value, *as otherwise they never could*, His marvellous light. Shadows doubtless have their purpose in the universe of mind, as in the universe of matter.

As the heart is the fountain of life in the body, so love may with reverence be spoken of as the central and motive principle in the Deity. Its unceasing influence is manifested in Divine wisdom, Divine power, Divine holiness, Divine justice, Divine goodness, Divine truth. Anything affirmed concerning the Divine character or acts, which is not in perfect harmony with the declaration that "God is love," must be a lie.

Some people allege that God's love may be dwelt upon too much,—put forward so prominently as to shut

out from view other Divine attributes. But God's love in Christ is a "love which passeth knowledge:" finite mind never can fathom its infinite depths. The greater the conception we are able to form of it, the higher and the truer will our idea be of the other attributes of Deity. Moreover, the firmer our faith in the love of God, and the closer our imitation of it, the more godlike we become, in all respects in which it is possible for creatures to resemble in any degree the infinite Creator.

Christ points out one way in which we are to follow the example of our loving Father, if we would be faithful children, in these words: "I say unto you, Love your enemies, bless them that curse you, do good to them that hate you, and pray for them which despitefully use you and persecute you; *that ye may be the children of your Father which is in Heaven.*" We must love, not only our brethren, not only our friends who love us, not only our neighbours with whom we are on pleasant terms, but even our bitterest enemies, who curse us, who hate us, who use us despitefully, and persecute us. We are not merely to abstain from doing them harm; but we are required really to love them, to take an interest in them, to desire their welfare, to invoke blessings upon them, to do them good with all sincerity of purpose, and to pray for them to our Father in Heaven, who alone can do them good in the highest sense and for ever. Jesus the Son of God assures us, that thus we shall be the children of our Father which is in Heaven, that thus we shall act as becomes the children of His Father and our Father, that thus we shall, in our degree, resemble God our Creator; "for

He maketh His sun to rise on the evil and on the good, and sendeth rain on the just and on the unjust." We can imitate our Father in Heaven, only at an infinite distance; yet this must not discourage us from aiming at conformity to His character. He is perfect: we cannot be perfect in the same sense. But we are to aim at completeness according to our measure; our love is not to be one-sided or exclusive, but all-embracing, and godlike. We are not to confine our love to the people of our own nation, or sect, or social circle; but we are earnestly to desire, and, when we can, promptly to labour for, the well-being of all who are beyond these narrow boundaries, however much cause we may have to complain of their unjustifiable hatred and active hostility. To act thus, is to show ourselves to be the children of God. He does not confine his favors to those who love Him. He sends his sunshine and rain, two of the greatest temporal benefits, not on the good people only, but on the evil people also,—not on just men only, but on the unjust too. And these outward benefits, thus universally bestowed, are but signs and symbols of spiritual benefits which God bestows upon all men liberally, and which are included under the word *Redemption*.

Accordingly, when Christ commands us to love, and bless, and do good to our enemies, even though they hate us, and curse us, and do all in their power to injure us, He commands us to do, in our humble sphere, what God our Heavenly Father does on a vast scale, and in ways far beyond our comprehension. *We* are to make no exceptions, because God makes none. He loves *His*

enemies, all of them, the very worst of them, even those who most bitterly hate Him and most blasphemously curse him. And, since He is Almighty God, the giver of all spiritual grace, and needs not to pray for them to a higher than Himself, because there *is* none higher, His infinite love and wisdom will, in due time, devise ways and means to “bless them” and “do” them “good.” For He “will have all men to be saved, and to come to the knowledge of the truth;” and “He doeth according to His will in the army of heaven and among the inhabitants of the earth.” But “the kingdom of God cometh not with observation,”—with outward noise and show. The Divine work is going on, though we see or hear so little of it. The grain of mustard seed is growing up and becoming a great tree, though silently and very slowly. The little leaven, though hidden, is leavening the whole lump; and “the whole” shall be leavened, as the Lord’s parable predicts. Not one particle of all the meal shall in the end remain unleavened. The parable is only two verses long, and its teaching is perfectly clear. The leavening is slow work, very slow, but surely not slower than God intendod. What is the leaven but the love of God, seeking each particle, until love find it? yea, and *reaching one particle through another*. The love of God is the central life of His kingdom. It is the principle that attracts all to itself, and spreads vitality through all that is thus attracted. We are invited to pray, “Thy kingdom come;” and when Christ said to the apostle John, in the Apocalypse, “Surely I come quickly,” the apostle answered, “Amen; even so, come, Lord Jesus.” Following the apostle, we

pray that Christ's kingdom may be *hastened*. This is a way of expressing earnestness in our Master's cause, and willingness to labour for its advancement. But I cannot think that this justifies the style of remonstrance with reference to the actual delay, and the querulous tone which one often hears addressed to God in extempore prayers; as if God were really breaking His promises, because the world is not converted so soon as was expected,—because the Spirit is not yet poured out upon all flesh, as it was on the apostles at Pentecost. If we believe in Divine prophecy at all, we must know that God will fulfil His promise in His own time; and if we believe in God at all, we ought to be satisfied that His time is always best. While, therefore, it is our duty, and our privilege, and our great happiness, to work away steadily in our allotted place in God's vineyard, it argues prodigious ignorance and presumption on our part to murmur because the growth of the Divine tree is so gradual, and the leavening of the measures of meal so slow. In the first chapter of the Bible, the Almighty is said to have extended the work of creation over a series of days, or periods; and it pleases Him to extend the work of redemption over a series of periods, of which the limits are to us unknown. These periods are called in Scripture the *dispensations*, the *ages*, the *eternities* (in the plural). The plan of all these dispensations, ages, eternities, has been before God from the beginning. Each human life is contained in that plan, with all our free-agency, all our infirmities, all our acts of obedience and disobedience, our obstinacy or our penitence, our unbelief or our faith, to the hour of our dissolution, and

also our happiness or misery beyond that date so close at hand. Our destiny is all laid out. God knows how many hours, or weeks, or months, of sickness each of us is to pass through, unless death be sudden; yet this never prevents us, and never ought to prevent us, from taking medical advice and using remedies. In like manner, our spiritual history is all known and provided for in the Divine counsels; yet in such a way that every free act of the unfettered will, and every use of prescribed means, with the endless chain of consequences hanging upon each, link by link, is included in that history.

Thankful ought we to be that it is so—that the world and its inhabitants are not governed by chance or by caprice, but by omniscient and omnipotent love. “God reigneth: let the earth be glad!”—“The eternal God is our refuge: underneath are the everlasting arms.”—“God is love;” yet He Himself says, “*I create evil.*” For wise reasons He determined that the resisting of evil, and suffering on account of evil, should be part of man’s discipline. But He provided the remedy, the redemption of the world through our Lord Jesus Christ. Redemption, from first to last, is the bringing of good out of evil,—the triumph of good over evil. The end for which evil existed having been answered, evil itself will be destroyed. God created it: God will destroy it. Then will He be “all in all.” These are the last and grandest notes from the Gospel trump of jubilee, proclaiming liberty to every captive, and the opening of the prison-doors to all them that are bound.

Words can convey no adequate idea of the importance

of a right belief on this, the greatest of all subjects that can occupy our thoughts. Unless we see clearly that God's dealings with His creatures have been loving and fatherly from the beginning, are loving and fatherly now, and are to be loving and fatherly in the periods before us, it is impossible for a reflecting mind to have confidence in God. A selfish rejoicing in personal security, and a cold acquiescence in the supposed hopeless and unalterable doom of the millions and millions who are less favoured, may pass, as it does, for true religion, until the foundations be tested. But this kind of religion is spurious. It is a form of selfishness. It is contrary to the teaching and example of Christ. It is inconsistent with the general tenor of Holy Writ; and it is logically subversive of the truth that "God is love" and the loving Father of "His offspring." The essence of true religion must ever be love to God and man. But how are we really to love God, unless we know that He is not only just, but loving and merciful, to our *neighbours* as well as to ourselves. He commands *us* to love them: does He not love them Himself? He commands us to love our enemies who hate us: does not He love His enemies who hate Him? In such inquiries the tongue may be silent; but conscience and reason will speak out. Can it be questioned that God is able, at any time, to convert the whole world by the same means which brought thousands into the Christian fold at Pentecost? Is not God able, if it please Him, to send His Spirit this day with pentecostal power and efficacy into the heart of every human being on the face of the earth? How is any sinner ever converted from

the love of sin to an ardent longing after holiness? Is it not by the Spirit of the living God, impressing the soul deeply with a sense of the evil and misery of sin, and of the blessedness of obedience, and salvation through Christ? There is in this no compulsion interfering with the freedom of the individual will; but the mind is persuaded to choose the good, while the heart is touched by the offer of pardon and of eternal life. Thus gratitude, love, and an earnest desire to obey, spring up in the soul. This is conversion. Is it not in the power of God, by the unseen influence of His Holy Spirit, to convert every soul that is at present unconverted? God “will have all men to be saved;” and it certainly is in His power thus to convert and save them *now*. But He does *not* thus convert and save them *now*. Every day, multitudes who love and practise open sin, die unconverted—die in their sins. If God loves them, as He commands us to do, why does He not grant them the grace which would convert them,—the same grace which He bestows for the conversion of others? The traditional theology, which teaches that death is the close of probation to every soul, and the gate through which mankind in general pass into endless torments, cannot answer this. Leading tenets of that theology are, therefore, contradictory. If God really loves His enemies, as He commands us to do; if He loves our fellow-creatures whom He commands us to love; is it credible that He can allow them to perish without remedy, for want of that grace which is necessary to their conversion, and which He alone has the power to bestow? If God never did love, and never will love,

millions of His creatures whom He commands *us* to love, what are we to make of all the clear texts of Scripture which teach exactly the reverse?

The real state of the case, as far as God has been pleased to reveal it, I take to be this. Our Creator is doing exactly what from the beginning He intended to do. There is a half-truth in Calvinism. In the present dispensation, which is preliminary to a greater, only the elect will be true Christians. It was the purpose of God from the first to choose out of mankind, in the present dispensation, a certain number of persons as “vessels made to honour,” as “kings and priests unto God,” and “joint-heirs” with Christ. “Wherefore,” as our seventeenth Article (which has been a stumbling-block to many, on account of corollaries supposed to belong to it) most truly says, “they which he endued with so excellent a benefit of God, be called according to God’s purpose by His Spirit working in due season: they through grace obey the calling: they be justified freely: they be made sons of God by adoption: they be made like the image of His only-begotten Son Jesus Christ: they walk religiously in good works, and at length, by God’s mercy, they attain to everlasting felicity.”

To all this, and every word of the Article, I give my unfeigned assent. But the Article does *not* go on to say, that all who are not thus chosen are to “suffer everlasting torments, both in body and soul, in hell-fire for ever.” A more hideous doctrine, than this of the Westminster divines, was never expressed in human language. Let us search the Scriptures. Where is it

to be found? Where are the passages that with any semblance of fairness can be called "proof-texts?" Where is it affirmed in the Bible that there will be no probation in the age to come? no opportunity of instruction allowed to the ignorant, no opportunity of repentance allowed to the impenitent? Let this matter be inquired into. The revelation is from our Father. What it is needful for us to know, is not hidden behind obscure phrases or locked up in doubtful metaphors. God speaks plainly what it behoves us to understand clearly. Had the destiny of ninety-nine hundredths of all who have ever lived upon the earth been endless torments,—had it been possible for such a doctrine to be true, can we suppose that it would have been merely hinted at in parables or dark sayings which might easily be misinterpreted?

That the kingdom of Christ is not to be established in this dispensation, the Scriptures do most distinctly teach. "We see not yet all things put under Him." An elect church is now being gathered out of the nations, and prepared for high honor and great authority in the age to come. Christ hath gone "into a far country to receive for Himself a kingdom, and *to return*." It is *after* His return that His kingdom upon earth will be established,—His reign recognized and submitted to by willing subjects, from the rising of the sun to the going down of the same. "His feet shall stand in that day upon the Mount of Olives,"—"and the Lord shall be King over all the earth." (Zech. xiv. 4, 9.) Then will commence the next dispensation, the next age, or, as it is sometimes called, the next world.

St. Jude prophecies, "The Lord cometh with ten thousand of His saints." They are "the children of the Resurrection"—that is, of the first resurrection, to which St. Paul earnestly hoped to attain. Christ Himself says, "They which shall be accounted worthy to obtain that world, *and the resurrection* from the dead, neither marry nor are given in marriage; neither can they die any more [this passage is quite independent of the word *αἰώνιος*: Christ here declares that the righteous shall live for ever]: for they are equal unto the angels; and are the children of God, *being the children of the Resurrection.*" These are the elect saints, chosen out of the world to be "kings and priests unto God." They are "the children of the Resurrection,"—of "the first Resurrection." This is spoken of by our Lord as a privilege belonging only to the children of God who have finished their course and kept the faith.

The doctrine of election, when taught together with the predestined reprobation and consignment to endless torments of all who are *not* elected, is a horrible dream. All the moral instincts which God Himself has placed in the human soul, revolt against it; therefore it could not proceed from the God who made us. But the doctrine of election, as taught by St. Paul, is a very different matter. It is consistent with what we see all around us in the world. Some are born into the world as nobles, others as servants; some in the midst of affluence, others in the midst of poverty. And it appears to be necessary to the working of the laws of political economy, which are as truly God's laws as the ten commandments were, that these inequalities should

exist. Nor can we doubt but it is because inequalities are necessary to the working of higher laws in the coming ages, that some are elected to be "vessels unto honour," and "some to dishonour," comparatively,—to less honour (that is the meaning) but still for service : just as "in a great house there are not only vessels of gold and silver, but also of wood and of earth."

We have been elected to privileges ; and if we avail ourselves of these privileges, we shall inherit eternal life as "kings and priests unto God." We have the Gospel : millions are without it. We know the way of salvation : millions are ignorant of it. "To whom much is given, of them shall the more be required." "The godly consideration of our election in Christ," as the Article says, "is full of sweet, pleasant, and unspeakable comfort to godly persons, and such as feel in themselves the working of the Spirit of Christ, mortifying the works of the flesh and their earthly members, and drawing up their mind to high and heavenly things." It has the effect of confirming our faith, and kindling our love to God. But all the means are predestined, as well as the end. (It ought ever to be kept in mind that the word *predestination* involves a fallacy, although we are obliged to use it. God has no relations to time.) Our health or sickness of body is all predestined. But so are the circumstances which lead to health and sickness ; and for many of these circumstances we are personally and consciously responsible, as they are certainly under our control by God's permission. The subject has a metaphysical side, and a practical side. For each of us the practical truth is this. God has elected me to great

privileges. The means of grace are within my reach. If I faithfully use them, God will give them efficacy. It is therefore my highest interest, as well as my bounden duty, to watch and pray, giving all diligence to make my calling and election sure.

But it is one thing to rejoice in our privileges, and to avail ourselves of them ; it is another and a very different thing, a most selfish and sinful thing, not to care much what becomes of the nations and generations of our fellow-creatures who are less favored. There is a great revelation of the character of God in our Saviour's words, "Love your enemies, that ye may be the children of your Father which is in heaven." It is clear from this, that God loves His enemies even while they continue to be His enemies. Had not this been the case, indeed, who could have been saved ? All the saints in glory were His enemies once. But the object of the Gospel is to turn enemies into friends. "While we were yet enemies, we were reconciled to God by the death of His Son."

Endless torments resulting from infinite love ! We talk of infinite space, and have a vague idea of distance stretching beyond the stars. We talk of endless duration, and have an equally vague idea of extended time. Our notion of eternity, although few think it, is immensely inferior to what we can reckon by the power of numbers. Endless torments ! "We are but of yesterday." We know so little, in comparison with what we do *not* know, that the little may almost be considered nothing. Yet the little that we do know, is of vast importance to us. We know that there is a difference

between right and wrong. We know that there is a difference between love and vengeance. We know that there is a difference between God and the Devil.

XV.

I am one of those who generally find it easier and more pleasant to agree than to differ. But are there not times when silence implies acquiescence, when the withholding of blame is a sin before God, when it is manifestly a duty, not only to differ, but to express dissent in earnest words and with the strongest emphasis?

St. Paul tells the Corinthians that God made him and Timothy "able ministers of the New Covenant, not of the letter, but the spirit." "The letter killeth, but the spirit giveth life." He speaks of the Jews' religion, taken literally and without reference to Christ, as "the ministration of condemnation;" of the Christian Gospel as "the ministration of righteousness." The old system he calls also "the ministration of death;" the new, "the ministration of the Spirit"—the quickening Spirit of God. He says, that down to the very time when he wrote his epistle, the Jews continued blind to the Messianic meaning of their ancient law; that, when Moses was read, the veil was upon their hearts; that, while they clung to the letter, they knew not the Spirit which alone gave it vitality. They were blind to the inner sense, which God meant the outward form to teach. They were proud of the hieroglyphics, as an unlettered Egyptian might be to-day of the pictures on

his country's obelisks, without being able to understand their sense.

The apostle then declares that "the Lord is that Spirit;" that the Messiah is the inner meaning of the symbols of the Mosaic law; that the Divine Word is the essence and life and power of the written word in the ancient Scriptures. "And where the Spirit of the Lord is," adds the inspired Paul, "there is liberty." We are no longer under "the yoke of bondage" to a round of burdensome observances; no longer under the bondage of terror, when we think of God and death and judgment. We, who believe in Jesus as the Messiah, are no more servants or slaves, but sons, heirs of God, and joint-heirs with Christ. "We all, with open face [uncovered by a veil] beholding as in a glass the glory of the Lord [seeing in the Mosaic dispensation, as in a mirror, the glory of Christ] are changed into the same image, from glory to glory, as by the Spirit of the Lord"—are transformed by the Spirit of Christ into the likeness of Christ, from one degree of glory to a higher and a yet higher degree. We are not only raised to a higher level, intellectually, than those Jews who read the law with a veil over their minds, and fancy that "the letter" is the whole matter; that the blood of bulls and goats takes away sin; that the decorations of the temple, and the vestments of the priests, and the washings and fastings and formularies are in themselves of importance in the sight of the living God who made heaven and earth and all things that are therein: we are not merely raised to a higher level, so that we see the Divine character and providence from a higher point of view; but, by

recognizing Christ and Christian truths under all the Jewish symbolism—by beholding the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ, even under the letter, the shadows, the institutions and ceremonies of the old law, and the whole ritual dispensation, we are being ourselves spiritually transformed, gradually but really, into the moral image of the glorious Being on whom our mental gaze is fixed.

St. Paul then shows the consequence, in his own mind and conduct, of this new view of the Old Testament—the consequence of having found the spirit in the letter, the Messianic meaning under the symbolical form. “Therefore, seeing we have this ministry, as we have received mercy, we faint not.” We shrink not from the allotted duty, whatever opposition we may have to meet, since God has had mercy upon us, clinging in unbelief to “the letter” and the traditions grafted upon it, and has revealed to us “the spirit” which is enshrined in it, and sent us to preach this freshly-discovered truth. We shrink not; “but have renounced the hidden things of dishonesty [the shameful glosses and other traditional artifices, by which the Jewish doctors evaded difficulties and misled the people]; not walking in craftiness, nor handling the Word of God deceitfully; but by manifestation of the truth, commending ourselves to every man’s conscience in the sight of God.” He and Timothy believed, and were sure, that the truth of God, plainly set forth, would speak for itself; that there was a Divine power in it which made ultimate triumph certain; that there was nothing to be concealed or modified by the ingenious devices of man; that the right

way to preach was to be candid and outspoken and honest ; and that, whatever difficulties might be raised or suggested by their adversaries, the simple exhibition of the truth would commend it to the conscience of every man who gave it a fair hearing as in the sight of God.

In short, St. Paul had faith in the Divine origin of the truth which he proclaimed. Although, as a Pharisee of the Pharisees, “brought up at the feet of Gamaliel,” his Jewish prejudices must have been of the strongest, yet by the grace of God he renounced them all, and determined, as far as human infirmity would permit, to know nothing and teach nothing of which Christ crucified was not the central doctrine.

Every reader of the New Testament is aware in what light his fellow-countrymen regarded him ; how they denounced him as a pestilent fellow and a stirrer-up of sedition ; how he was persecuted but not forsaken, cast down but not destroyed. His Christian life may almost be called a continuous martyrdom. In many respects it stands alone among human biographies. No mere man ever exerted so wide an influence for good, by teaching and example, as Paul, the tent-maker of Tarsus.

Fourteen centuries passed over the church, and the Gospel which Paul preached had become so corrupted that one could scarcely recognise it. Luther went to Rome, and trembled at the abominations which abounded there. We know how he and his fellow-workers fared, after they had stirred up the nests of a generation of vipers on the seven hills and throughout

Europe. The thunders of the Vatican were fulminated against them. All known languages were ransacked for epithets to express the furious malignity of the Papal church. The reformers were decried as emissaries of Satan, hunted like wild beasts, imprisoned in loathsome dungeons; many of them tortured on the rack, hanged in chains, beheaded on the block, burned at the stake. And yet the truth *commended itself to men's consciences in the sight of God*. They who came to the Light were blessed by the light. A new era began to dawn. Europe awoke from its long sleep. Kingdom after kingdom shook off the yoke of Roman bondage. The history of the infallible Papacy was looked into; and if Moloch or Baal-peor had been the god of Christendom, many parts of that history could not have been more bloody or more foul. This opened the eyes of whole nations. Protestantism against Roman error grew and prospered; and whatever there is now of civil and religious liberty in the world may be traced back to the movement which shook the superstitions of a thousand years, three centuries ago.

Human nature, however, is now, as it ever has been, prone to idolatry and superstition. The speculative fabrics, which, under the name of Protestant theology, have been reared and consolidated since the Reformation, are made up in part of dogmas which do *not* commend themselves to every man's conscience in the sight of God. The grand principle of the Reformation was the supremacy of the conscience and reason of each individual, in the interpretation of Scripture for his own guidance. Blind obedience to mere church authority

gave way to the right of private judgment. But the human masses are always too indolent, or too indifferent, or too ignorant, to exercise their private judgment; and Protestants soon began again to pin their faith to the gowns of eminent ecclesiastics, as units or as corporations. But no system of speculative theology has ever yet borne the test of time and the criticism which time brings. Weak places have been found in the best. The fact is, as already has been observed, God is educating the human race; and the mental power of the race is growing, as the leading minds grow richer in attainments. If the great doctors who led the people in the sixteenth century were alive to-day, who can doubt but they would modify many opinions which we find in their writings?

The ceremonial law was like a primer, or picture-book of lessons, given to the Israelitish nation in its childhood. When Christ came, the primer was superseded; and many things in the Old Testament, besides the ceremonial law, have ceased to be authoritative to us, under the more advanced economy which our Lord introduced. *His teaching never can grow old; its principles never can be superseded.* But theology is the greatest of the sciences; and, like the other sciences, it is steadily progressing. Its principles are unchanging as the laws of nature; but, like the laws of nature, they are becoming better understood. Theology and piety are distinct, though connected. A great theologian may have no piety; and many a pious soul has very little theology. Theology is chiefly for the head, piety for the heart. It is at the door of the heart that Christ

knocks ; it is by way of the affections that He will enter in to sup with His disciple. Yet, when theology is misapprehended, or perverted, or neglected, by Christian teachers, piety is apt to degenerate into credulity and superstition. Look at the Roman church everywhere for evidence of this.

(Let it be understood that when the nature of my subject requires me to animadvert on the Papal system, I do so in a spirit of real charity toward those who are subject to it. The effect of early training on men's opinions is so great, that it explains many phenomena which otherwise would be unaccountable. Good men in the most corrupt church are always better than their theology ; and those who live up to the light they have are surely worthy of our brotherly love, however much we may lament what we consider their errors.)

The progress of intellectual freedom has always been slow. It has ever been obstructed by ignorance, and prejudice, and the hostility of those whose material interests are likely to be disturbed by any change. At this hour, free inquiry is put under the ban even in Protestant England ; as if Christians had cause to dread the prospect of being led into *all* truth ; as if God could be worshipped more acceptably by closing the windows of the Church in broad day, shutting out the light of heaven, and praying in the dark ! I say, the light of heaven. *All* truth is light ; all truth is heavenly ; all truth is Divine. Christ Himself is the central truth of the universe ; and the idea of advancing His kingdom by fostering prejudice, perpetuating ignorance, anathematizing inquiry, blustering against science, and propa-

gating real falsehoods, is part of a time-serving policy which assuredly cannot be Christian. Brave honest thinking is, to say the least, at a discount where it ought to be honored; branded with nicknames, and pelted with epithets, where it ought to be met with weapons very different from declamation and abuse.

The truth of Christianity, fairly stated, candidly examined, and practically tested, will commend itself to every man's *consciousness*. It will be found to have the same Divine origin as the human soul, for which it is intended and to which it is adapted. We need have no fear of all the light that learning and science can throw upon it. Defects, which the light exposes, can be no part of Christianity, although Christian teachers may have confounded defects with essentials. A spot on a lady's robe is no part of her constitution. What was addressed to individuals may be applied to churches. "Every one that doeth evil hateth the light." "But he that doeth truth cometh to the light, that his deeds may be made manifest, that they are wrought in God." Christianity is being elucidated every day by inquiry. Its harmony with all outside truths is far better understood now than it was by the early fathers, or even by the best and ablest of the reformers: and that harmony will be better understood a century hence than it is to-day. The discovery of such harmony belongs to the theological science; and *there* trained intellects alone can succeed.

But, apart from high investigations of this kind, simple faith in Jesus Christ, as God manifest in the flesh, the Saviour of the world, who came from heaven

to teach us that God is love, that He is our Father, and that He sent His Son into the world, not to condemn the world, but that the world, through Him, might be saved—this simple faith ever has transformed the character, and it continues to do so now. *It fills the mind with light : it fills the heart with love.* It will do so to the end of the world : it will do so through all the ages of the endless future. Science has broken down, and it will yet break down, some greatly-admired outworks ; but it cannot touch the citadel of our faith. The outworks are man's : the citadel is God's. Were it not so, it would not be worth defending, and it would be the sheerest folly to trust our souls to it. In all the triumphs of true science, past, present, and future, let us never cease to rejoice. Over the downfall of error, delusion, superstition, and bigotry, let us ever sing pæans to the God of truth.

In theology, and in every science, the first question is, What saith the Lord ? And in the pious heart of the least-instructed Christian that same question will have the foremost place, "What saith the Lord ?"—"I will hear what God the Lord will speak." But how shall I know whether it is the Lord who speaks, or an evil spirit, or my own deceitful heart ? By this test, the truth, in all matters of moral and spiritual importance, carries its own evidence along with it, as the sun does in the sky. *It commends itself to every man's conscience in the sight of God.*

CONCLUSION.

I cannot, my Lord Archbishop, trespass on your time and patience beyond *fifteenthly*. This "Answer" may be thought lengthy, wordy, and tedious; but I have some hope that candid and competent judges will pronounce it to be really an answer. If there were time for condensation, I could make it shorter; but your Grace's statement will have been at least six months in print before these pages can appear; and a wooden mallet, as well as a sledge-hammer, may be used to drive a wedge. The same ideas, or trains of thought, have no doubt been reiterated in various forms.* What is put together in haste cannot have the same finish as what is elaborated at leisure. But a few knots in the wood, some open seams, and the absence of French polish, though ruinous to the value of a park phaeton, do not at all affect the usefulness of a carrier's cart. In such a lumbering vehicle I have sent a load of weighty facts and considerations to your Grace's palace-door, to be disposed of as you may think best. If you will admit the facts, and weigh the considerations, it matters little what may be the fate of the cart or the name of the carrier. He charges you nothing for his trouble, and sincerely hopes that your Grace may see no cause to be offended. He seeks neither notoriety nor martyrdom in the Court of Arches, and asks only to be let alone,

* This will not be much objected to by the general reader, for whose benefit the Letter, though formally addressed to an Archbishop, is of course really intended.

believing himself to be as honest a member of the Church of England as any bishop on the bench.

We pray every Sunday in the Litany, "That it may please God to have mercy upon *all* men." Does the Church of England hold that endless torments are the doom of most men?

In the "Private Prayers" of the blessed Bishop Andrews, one of the holiest men who ever adorned the Church of England, I read as follows:—

"O Thou Hope of all the ends of the earth, remember *all creatures* for good : visit the world in mercy.

"O Guardian of men, most gracious Lord, remember *our whole race* : Thou who hast concluded all in unbelief, *have mercy on all*, O Lord.

"O Thou, who for this end didst both die and revive, to be Lord of the dead and the living ; Pity, Lord, the living *and the dead*."*

Indeed I do not envy your Grace, with the "Speaker's Commentary" on hand, and the foregone conclusion in your mind that you must bring the dogma of Endless Torments out of the Sacred Text in a scholarly way. Oh, that the words of Holy Scripture contained in these humble pages might fall like a shower of live shells among your co-workers, who are now tinkering away at the Traditions of the Elders, trying to make them hold water ! "Magna est veritas, et praevalerebit."

I have been able only to sketch an outline of the argument ; but I have endeavoured to show, from fifteen different points of view, that your opinions undermine, if I mistake not, the very foundations of Christianity as

* Rev. E. Bickersteth's edition in "The Christian's Family Library."

a Gospel—"good tidings of great joy" to mankind. I trust that enough has been said to make it impossible for any one honestly to repeat the assertion, that "the doctrine of a terminable punishment for the wicked finds no countenance whatever from Holy Scripture." I hope it will be evident to the reader, that they who believe in the Redemption, and therefore ultimate restoration, of the race, are not reduced to the necessity of giving "plausible" but untrue "explanations of texts" supposed to "make against them;" and that the bold assertion, "Even they must admit that there is not one passage of Scripture that clearly authorizes the hope of restoration for the sinner once condemned," is diametrically opposed to the impression which any unprejudiced person must receive from a careful perusal of texts which I have quoted. I lift up my hands in astonishment when I re-peruse your Grace's statement cited at the beginning of this Letter; and I feel bound, be the consequences to me personally what they may, to lift up my voice like a trumpet against you.

You say, "The declarations that the punishment of the wicked is eternal are many, and those most clear and emphatic. Eternal wrath put into antithesis with eternal life; eternal chains; the wrath of God abiding on a man so that he shall never see life; the worm that never dieth: can all these be explained away?" I have attempted, my Lord, to explain, but not to "explain away" some of the texts referred to; and you are perfectly aware that the dogma which you defend hinges upon the meaning of the word rendered "everlasting" in our Authorized Version, and in the Athanasian

Creed. Greek scholars of European reputation have over and over again given judgment against you, with regard to the meaning of *αἰώνιος*. I quoted Stillingfleet as a *theologian* of eminence in our own church; and I might have added the opinion of Bengel, as a continental theologian of the first rank on the “evangelical” side. His note on St. Matthew xxv. 46, is valuable. “There is a difference,” he says, “between *τιμωρία*, *vengeance*, and *κόλασις*, *punishment*; for *punishment* is inflicted for the sake of him who suffers, *vengeance* for the satisfaction of him who inflicts it (see Arist. Rhet. i. 10, n. 31); *αἰώνιον*, *eternal*, signifies that which reaches and passes the limits of earthly *time*.” In other words, it is very far from signifying *endless*.

Your Grace proceeds to remark that even if the texts and expressions to which you refer could be explained away, “not one of them promises salvation for the sinner once condemned. If they were not conclusive for everlastingness, they would not be in favor of the salvation of the wicked at the last.” These words, I cannot help thinking, must have been penned in haste. They bear all the marks of it. Would it be reasonable to expect a direct proof of “the salvation of the wicked at the last” in the very texts adduced to prove the contrary? From *other* passages I have given direct proofs, which no ingenuity can ever set aside.

“On the other hand,” your Grace continues, “the doctrine that the wicked are punished for ever would be gathered, not from these express texts alone, but from the whole tenor of Scripture, which speaks of this life as our probation, and of the next as our reward,

which represents the judgment as final, which is utterly silent as to any economy of probation after death."

Some of the greatest prelates the Church of England has produced, including Warburton and Whately, have doubted, or denied, the possibility of showing in the Old Testament *any revelation of a future state*. Yet the Old Testament is the larger part of "Scripture;" and when "the whole tenor of Scripture" is appealed to, the Old Testament cannot be overlooked. I mention this, not because I agree with the prelates just named (I sincerely prefer the doctrine of the seventh Article); but because it is plain, from what has now been said, that your Grace has written too confidently, and very incautiously, on the greatest of all themes. Whether your teaching can be reconciled with "the whole tenor" of the *New Testament*, or even with the few passages brought forward in the preceding pages, I must now leave the reader to decide. I believe in my heart that you have "exceeded" and "departed from the statements of Scripture upon this awful subject." If your Grace's theory were correct, it could not be truly affirmed that "we are in the hands of a just God," nor that He "has revealed in Holy Writ His way of dealing with His creatures so far as we need to know it."

You, my Lord Archbishop, are enthroned in York-minster; and probably there is no man living better qualified by gifts and attainments for that post of danger and honor. It therefore becomes an obscure person like me to show very great deference in contra-

vening your assertions on any subject. But I pray you to forgive my expressing warmly what I feel so deeply. I would not, for fifty mitres and the plaudits of a General Council, exchange my idea of God and the Gospel for yours.

I now lay down my pen. I say *The Creed*, *The Lord's Prayer*, and *The Grace*. May God keep us from believing what is false, or denying what is true !

I have the honor to be,

My Lord Archbishop,

With great respect,

Your Grace's most humble servant,

THE AUTHOR.

FINIS.

DATE DUE

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